THE GLORY OF LIFE

J. Monro Gibson

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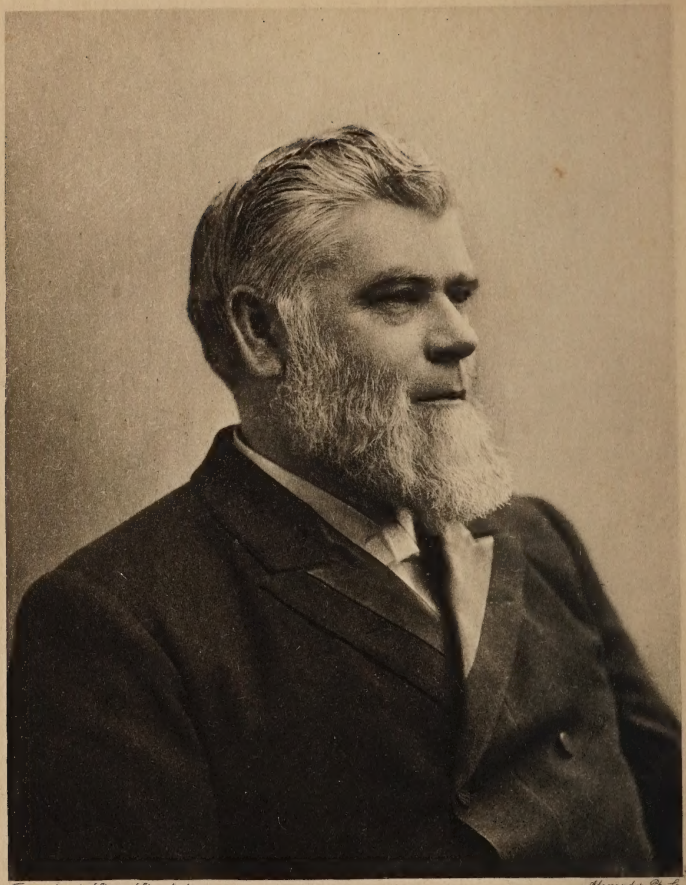
THE GLORY OF LIFE ON EARTH



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Mouro Gibson

THE GLORY OF LIFE ON EARTH

AND OTHER

SERMONS AND ADDRESSES

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BY

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PREFACE

My Publisher asks me to write a Preface to the following sermons and addresses, and suggests that in it I should deal with a topic of the day. To comply with this request at the present time means to write on *the* topic of the day. I shall therefore present here some considerations on the great moral problem of the hour, the Ethics of War.

There can be no difference of opinion among followers of the Prince of Peace as to the hatefulness of war in the abstract and the sinfulness of unnecessary or unjustifiable wars; but inasmuch as actual war always implies two parties, they may not both be blameworthy, or, if to some extent both are, the blame may be very unequally distributed. We may assume that all true Christian people sorrowfully deplore the war in which we are now engaged with the two South African Republics, while many look upon it as a crime of the deepest dye; but even so there is abundant room for difference of opinion as to how the criminality is distributed—a question which will depend upon the view taken of the prior question as to which side is the aggressor.

On that subject I have taken occasion elsewhere to express my opinion quite frankly, and yet I trust with full charity and consideration toward those who take a different view; but it would not become me to make this preface a controversial pamphlet by advocating a private opinion. It would seem, however, not inappropriate that an endeavour should be made, with as much freedom from one-sidedness as may be possible, to present those abstract principles, on which we believe there may be general agreement, whatever differences exist as to their application.

I

The general principle governing the whole question is the paramountcy of the Kingdom of God. "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the Heavens, and His Kingdom ruleth over all." On the question of the paramountcy of Britain in South Africa there would be debatable points. On this paramountcy there can be none. We all owe allegiance to Queen Victoria, and we rejoice exceedingly and are most devoutly thankful that it is a glad and proud allegiance, which does not come into collision with the rights of conscience, and need put no strain on the whole-heartedness of our loyalty. But even this high allegiance is not really paramount. The Queen herself would be the first to acknowledge and declare that all her subjects owe supreme allegiance to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; that far

above the patriotism of country and of race there rises the still nobler patriotism which finds expression in this breathing of supreme devotion: "Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven."

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind." This is the supreme law for our loyalty, and it means much in a crisis like the present. Serious difficulties may arise in its application in detail, and sad enough mistakes are liable to be made; but it is a great thing clearly to acknowledge it, as I believe it is acknowledged by a larger number of thoughtful men now than at any previous time in the history of the world.

II

The next thing is the paramountcy of Righteousness in the kingdom. He who sits upon the throne is known first as King of Righteousness and then as King of Peace. These are His two great watchwords; and this is their invariable order. So in the Old Testament it is prophesied of Him: "In His days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." In the Sermon on the Mount Righteousness is given the place of preeminence. The Apostle of the Gentiles tells us that the Kingdom of God stands for "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"; and the Apostle

of the Jews declares that the wisdom which cometh from above is "first pure, then peaceable." Clearly then the paramountcy of righteousness is a law of the Kingdom, to which indeed the natural conscience of man bears witness, as illustration of which we may refer to the old Latin aphorism: *Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum.*

We are straitly charged indeed to "follow the things which make for peace"; but never at the expense of righteousness. Hence the qualifications with which the claims of peace are asserted—"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." One could not imagine the Apostle saying, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, deal honestly with all men." Nay, the claims of honesty, which is of course an element of righteousness, are supreme and imperative. A man should be willing to die rather than surrender them. It is clear then that there is no encouragement in Scripture to the doctrine of "peace at *any* price." But may we not infer, from the prominent position which peace holds in the Kingdom of God, as second only to Righteousness, that it should be sought at any price except this? Here again difficult questions arise in the application of the principle. But as to the principle itself there is almost universal agreement. It should therefore be our desire and aim ever "to follow the things which make for peace," with a due regard to the paramountcy of the claims of righteousness.

III

It will take us a little closer to questions in debate if we consider the relation which interest, advantage, or profit holds to righteousness on the one hand and peace on the other. If, as we have seen, peace comes immediately after righteousness and before even "joy in the Holy Ghost," must it not clearly take precedence of mere interest or advantage? We avoid the phrase "self-interest," because the term, as we shall see, is somewhat misleading in this connection. We often, however, speak of "our national interests," so the term should be easily understood. Well, it is unquestionable that the claims of peace are prior to those of mere interest. But why do we say *mere* interest? Because interest may coincide with what duty demands, in which case the element of righteousness comes in, which takes precedence of peace. Take a very simple case for illustration: May you or may you not defend your property against a burglar, to the extent of barring him out, or even of putting him out if he has got in? Clearly you may. But is not that putting interest before peace, seeing it is your interest to defend your property? Yes; but it is not a case of interest merely; you have also righteousness on your side. It would not be a Christian but a cowardly spirit that would let the robber have the free range of your premises rather

than attempt to fight him off. It is here that the old Quaker doctrine of non-resistance fails. It does not sufficiently take into account the paramountcy of righteousness. It singles out certain aphoristic sayings of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, without paying sufficient attention to the fact that these are not given till the supreme demands of righteousness have been first asserted.

Another consideration affecting the question of duty in relation to the defence of interest, which ought never to be lost sight of, is that while a man may sometimes properly enough sacrifice his own interests for the sake of peace, it does not follow that he has a right to sacrifice the interests of those dependent upon him. Suppose, for example, it is a dispute about money. A man is threatened with the loss of £100 through the injustice of a neighbour. He may say, "Let it go; I can do without it, and I should much rather lose the money than quarrel over it." That may be right enough—may be, I say; for you can easily imagine circumstances in which even that would not be right. Still it might be right, and even praiseworthy in certain circumstances. But supposing the man at liberty to let his own £100 go by default, would it be right to let it go, if it belonged to a widow or the orphans for whom it was his duty to act? Clearly not. Though a man may in certain circumstances surrender rights of his own to save himself trouble, or to avoid risk, or to keep the peace, he may not

so surrender rights of others which it is his duty to guard. It would be unfaithfulness and cowardice to do so.

Here again the application of this self-evident principle to a crisis like the present is not so easy and automatic as to secure perfect unanimity; but let us be thankful that these great principles are acknowledged; let us be thankful that by those responsible for the conduct of this war mere self-interest is repudiated, as, for example, in the emphatic words of the Prime Minister, "We seek no goldfields; we seek no territory." And is it not most satisfactory that while the desire for the aggrandisement of Great Britain, which is surely big enough to be content with what she has, is definitely repudiated, the justification of the insistence which has led to the war is sought—and many say found—in this, that it is not personal rights for which we are selfishly contending, but the rights of those who are dependent on us, to whom we stand in the relation of trustees and guarantors?

IV

So much for the mutual relations of righteousness, peace, and interest. But is there not another paramountcy to be considered? What of the supremacy of Love? What of that other table of the Supreme Law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"? Does not this modify what has been said?

Now it is not to be denied that to Love is given the very highest place in the ethics of the Christian life. But why? Not as superseding any other demand, but as including all. Love is never assigned supremacy over, or precedence of, righteousness. Its paramountcy therefore is not in any other sense than that of comprehensiveness, including both righteousness and peace. Love is the fulfilling of the Law. It is the sum of the Commandments. From which it follows that Love—in the large Scripture sense—is not the nerveless, pulpy thing which some take it to be. It has iron in its constitution. It has backbone in it. It has "fight" in it. If it has not, it is not worthy of the name. Try to take the cubs from a bear, if you wish to make sure whether love has fight in it. Try to harm the child, and see how the mother will blaze at you, and the father strike, if necessary.

Still Love is love, and not war. Love may lead to war, as we have seen; but even if it do, its paramountcy is not relaxed. Even in just wrath it will remember mercy. Even in the most imperative war, it should have all possible sway while the war lasts, and all proper influence in the settlement which shall follow. And here there are endless applications which can only be hinted at in the most general manner.

First, there should be no hatred nor vindictiveness. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he

thirst, give him drink." Here again may we not thankfully recognise that this has been done, is being done on both sides, and that not only by the leaders, but by the rank and file? We have had many touching illustrations of this among our men, as when we read of the soldiers who, though wearied with hard fighting for over seven hours, gladly gave the contents of their water-bottles to the wounded Boers, or when we read of the men of the Scots Guards carrying the wounded ashore from the ship, that "they could not have performed their task more gently had the Boers been their own brothers." Incidents like this show that war with all its horrors, which can scarcely be exaggerated and ought never to be minimised, does not necessarily set aside the law of brotherly love, but gives scope for some of its tenderest applications. I do not forget the ugly stories about the abuse of flags of truce, and firing on ambulances and hospitals; but it is encouraging to find that there is no disposition on the part of responsible men on the field to give too ready credence to such stories, but rather to make allowance for the effect of the want of discipline in the Boer army, rendering it more difficult for their officers than for ours to ensure that all the humane regulations of modern warfare should be respected.

And this suggests the claim of charity, not only on the battle-field but at home—by which I mean charity not only to the enemy abroad but to the

political opponent. Perhaps the most unchristian element in the whole history of the last three months has been the slanderous things said by extremists on the one side or the other. On the one side there have been uncharitable things said about the Boers without due distinction between the leaders and followers, or even between the loyal and the disloyal; and on the other side there have been uncharitable things said about our own country and our own Government. There are those who seem to forget the paramount claims of truth, which is just righteousness in heart and thought and speech. And to sacrifice truth, even in the supposed interests of peace, is only a degree less heinous a sin than to sacrifice it in the promotion of the hateful spirit of war. I do not forget that there have been conspicuous illustrations of fairness on both sides on the part of our public men, and on the part of the press too; but think what horrible examples of unfairness there have been. Why is it that in political warfare there are so many men, otherwise good enough, it would appear—perhaps very good—who seem to have no conception of the claims of charity; who think themselves perfectly justified, not only in attributing to their political opponents the very worst of motives, but even in uttering, writing, printing vilest slander? We need to have a far more universal acknowledgment of the paramountcy of charity. To put the best construction on the conduct of an opponent, even of a political opponent, is a Christian

duty; to put the worst, as some people seem always to do, is diabolical in the most literal sense, for that adjective is just the Greek form of the word slanderous. In no walk of life does there seem to be more of the *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi* than in politics; and if so, it is surely a crying iniquity of the time. May God forgive us, and lead us all to repentance, and to the acknowledgment of the great Christian duty of "speaking the truth in love" (*ἀληθεύοντες ἐν ἀγάπῃ*), Eph. iii. 15.

May the time soon come when there will be no slaying of our brother by bullet or bayonet, by pen or tongue; when the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and confidence for ever; when wars shall cease to the ends of the earth, and the Prince of Peace be acknowledged, worshipped, and obeyed as Lord Paramount all the world over!

January 1900.

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I

THE GLORY OF LIFE ON EARTH

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I

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"I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world."—JOHN xvii. 15.

THERE are parts of Scripture where it would be trifling to dwell on mere phrases or clauses, where the lesson is written large, and the separate parts are of little value except in their relation to the whole. But it is very different here. Every word is a voice from the great deep of divine love. I may then, without any fear of narrowing our view too much, ask you to give your undivided attention to one single clause of this prayer; especially as on account of its position it is rarely looked at by itself. It is so connected with the plain positive petition following, that attention readily glides from the one to rest on the other. There may then be an advantage, for once at all events, in keeping away from the latter and more familar part, in order that we may concentrate our attention on

the former and more peculiar part: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world."

Have you ever stopped to think how strange are these words on human lips? Can you imagine any circumstances in which you could use them? If it were a common thing for men to pray that their friends should be taken out of the world, it would be natural enough to say that you did not; but why disclaim a thing which nobody ever dreams of doing? We all believe in a brighter world beyond the grave; but we do not see it so very clearly as to be under any temptation to ask God to transfer our dearest friends to it. It is indeed quite common even among Christians to refer to their friends in Heaven with a note of profoundest pity, "He is gone, poor fellow!" and the better Christian a man is, the less likely is he even to entertain the wish, far less to offer the prayer, that any one should be taken out of the world. What then can we make of this strange disclaimer?

Think of it well, and you will see in these singular words a sure token of the Divine Sonship of Christ. Had He been as other men, He could not possibly have said this. But He is not as other men. He can with perfect distinctness see the glorious Heaven which is presently to open before Him; with equal distinctness He can see the dark and stormy future before His disciples. Shall He then, of His own free-will, go up to the

bright Heaven and leave them down in the dark world? How can He bear to keep them out of the glory into which He is entering, and send them into the storm from which He Himself is safe? Think of this, and the motive is as clear as day. No wonder He is tempted to pray for their departure with Himself to the better land. This is the reason that the petition is rising to His lips, and that it is with a strong effort He keeps it back; so we are no longer surprised that the traces of the struggle within should appear in the disclaimer of a request which is now not only natural but almost irresistible: "I pray not"—much as I yearn and long to do it—"I pray *not* that Thou shouldest take them out of the world."

Why then did He keep it back? "For the world's sake," it might be said, and often is said. But this is not the thought which is in His mind at the moment, for He has just said, "I pray not for the world, but for them." Was it then to give them time to get ready for the glory of Heaven? Surely not; for if the penitent thief was taken straight to Heaven, why not the Apostles?

The real reason is not far to seek. It shines out as we listen to the prayer and discover that their Lord has His mind fixed on a mission, a glory, a joy which the world has for them, and Heaven has not. "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world"; "the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them";

"these things I speak in the world that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves."

It would indeed have been an immediate gain to Peter, James, and John to have gone at once with Christ to glory; but think of the ultimate loss. Had Saul of Tarsus been taken straight to Heaven from the Damascus road, it would have been a rapturous change; but was it not far better that he should wait on, and toil on, through years of danger and distress, until he had gained the right to say: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course"? Peter and James and John and Paul shall live to all Eternity in heavenly blessedness; but do you not think the best of it all would have been missed if they had had an early and an easy exodus? So the dark and stormy earth is far better after all than the calm, clear Heaven; and we can plainly see that it was in love to them that the great Intercessor suppressed the petition which was rising to His lips, and put in its place the simple negative.

This is our Lord's intercessory prayer, not for apostles alone, but for all His people: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word." It is then for us. If we are His disciples, then we may think of Him as saying to His Father now: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take these, My disciples, out of the world." And His reason is

the same: that earth offers you and me a mission, a glory, a joy which cannot be had in Heaven. Oh friends, if we only knew it, it is a glorious thing to live in a world like this. It has for us great opportunities we may seek for in vain in Heaven, opportunities which even all the ages of Eternity may never offer again.

Alas! that so many should miss it all—miss what angels well may envy, desiring as they do to look into these things; and how much better is it to have a hand in them, to bear our part in the working out of God's great purposes of love. Alas! that so many should miss the very thing in life which would be the glory of life's memory through all Eternity.

It is likely that we are all quite ready to acquiesce in this part of our Lord's will concerning us. It is not at this point we are apt to be rebellious; but whether our resignation in this matter is much of a virtue may be somewhat doubtful. For why are we so well pleased that not yet should we be taken out of the world? What if our reason be as near as possible the reverse of His? What if the very things which should make us anxious to stay are those which make us less unwilling to go, and those things which should make us prefer the thought of going, the very things which make us most anxious to stay?

This is not a dark world altogether. There is a great deal of brightness and beauty in it; but unless we are entirely mistaken, earth cannot vie with

Heaven in beauty and brightness. So far as enjoyment is concerned, we might well long to be gone at once to the "land of pure delight, where saints immortal reign"; where "infinite day excludes the night, and pleasures banish pain"; where "everlasting spring abides, and never-withering flowers." And yet is it not its swiftly-withering flowers, its fast-fading springs, its passing pleasures that make this earth attractive to us? On the other hand, when we are weary of the world—if ever we are weary of it—is it not its darkness and misery that we are weary of? whereas it is just this that should make us wish to stay. Why? Because our Lord has put into our charge light for the world's darkness, peace for its pain, joy for its sorrow, life for its death. He who came to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty for the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, has sent us into the world as He was sent into it. Which of us then would wish to be anywhere else?

What brought the Lord Jesus to earth? Its brightness and beauty? Nay, its darkness and sin. It was earth's misery that attracted him. Not that He had any liking for misery; but because He had compassion on the miserable, and came to bring that which would relieve their wretchedness and finally take it away, giving them songs for sighing, and turning their darkness into light. He loved brightness and beauty so much that He could not keep it to Himself, but must take it to those who

had none of it. Therefore it was that He turned His back on the shining throngs of Heaven and set his face to the weary throngs of earth.

Was not Africa a better place for a noble soul like Livingstone or Gordon than Belgravia would have been? Would not Howard have made a poor exchange if he had given up the prisons of Europe for its palaces? And might not you make a poor exchange if, entering Heaven to-day, you left squalid, fever-stricken, sin-cursed London behind you, and carried with you a cure for its shame and pain to a place where there is no disease to cure, and no tear to wipe away?

Is it possible to make the best of both worlds? It is; but first let us make sure what is the best of each. Whether enjoyment is the best thing in the next world I greatly question; in fact I do not believe it—though joy will be perfect, there will be that which is better than even perfect joy; but whatever may be said of the next world, I am quite sure that enjoyment is not the best thing in this. Besides, in order to make the best of this world, we have to consider not only what is best in itself, but what is the specialty of the place. Let us illustrate. Suppose in hot summer weather you have a few days to spend at the seaside before going up to town for the year. A fine sea breeze is blowing on the shore; there is life and health in every breath of it. Here is a little stuffy museum in a back street with

some curiosities in it. You are politely invited to enter. You go in and are interested. You stay. You get more interested. You forget all about the sea and the object of your being in the place; you go back, and back, and spend your time bending over cases, pent up within narrow walls, till it is time to go back to town. What have you done? Nothing bad. You have not altogether wasted your time. The museum was good enough in its way; but would it not have been far better to have waited till you returned to town? Museums enough there surely, far better ones too; and you can have them all the year round. But you cannot bring the sea with you to the city. You missed the very thing the place was good for.

Now there are many Christian people who make a far greater blunder in the way they use the short time they have to stay on earth. They may not be making a bad use of their time, but they are very far from making the best of it. They are keen after things they need be in no hurry about, for they will get all they want of them by-and-by; and meantime they are letting slip priceless treasures to be gathered now or never. O thou who desirest wealth, be not in a hurry, you will have plenty by-and-by; for though Christians often speak of those who have gone to Heaven as "poor fellows," you do not really believe that they are actually suffering from poverty there. Or is your heart set on power? That too will be all right in the next world, if it be true that

we "shall *reign* for ever and ever." Or do you love pleasure? I do not mean sinful pleasure, which, indeed, is not pleasure at all—we are speaking to Christians, to those who know how to enjoy themselves; and we say not a word against enjoyment. Only remember you have a whole Eternity to enjoy yourself in; but only a very short time for having the joy of Christ fulfilled in you. Or are you a lover of ease, freedom from vexation and worry, a quiet, contemplative life at home? O my friend, there will be time enough for all that by-and-by. There "they shall rest from their labours," but this is the place to work. Thus saith the Lord to His Anointed, "Behold, I will give Thee the treasures of darkness." The "treasures of darkness"—there is the specialty of earth. O make sure of some of these ere the day break and the shadows flee away.

This world is a poor enough place for selfishness, and those who live for self alone might perhaps as well be out of it as soon as possible, provided only they did not go to a worse place; but it is a wonderful place for denying self. As to getting good, no doubt Heaven is greatly in advance; but so far as we can see, earth carries the day in opportunities for the doing of good. The Lord Jesus found it so; and so much did He value its priceless opportunities, that He cannot think of denying to His followers the same glory and joy to be fulfilled in them: "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world"; "the

glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them."

But now, is not all this somewhat Utopian? Is it not rather visionary and sentimental than practical? Is it not beyond the range of the common folks that most of us are? Are we not forgetting that Christ was speaking after all in the presence of His Apostles, and that we cannot all be Apostles? Now we do admit that the whole atmosphere of this prayer is above the range of those who are content to live the life of the world; but it ought not to be above the range of any true believer in Christ.

We have already called attention to our Saviour's express declaration that He prays not for the Apostles alone, but for all that shall believe on Him through their word: and therefore we ought by all means—every one of us—to lift up our souls to its height, and try to live according to its spirit.

If the glory which Christ sets before us as the great honour and privilege which earth has for His people could be gained only by those who were capable of a great work like the Apostle Paul, then indeed it would be a visionary thing for most of us, likely enough for all of us. But, thank God, it is no such thing! "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in

the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

"How far that little candle throws its beams! so shines a good deed in a naughty world." The rushlight in a cottage window, shining there merely to give a little light to the humble dwellers in the cottage, may guide the wanderer without into safety and shelter as effectually as if it had been a great beacon light kindled for no other purpose. And wherever there is the spirit of true consecration, there is light—light shining in the darkness of this world's selfishness and sin; and who can calculate the good that will come even from mere rushlights of true devotion which seem to go no further than the narrow limits of some humble home. It is a great thing to give light even in the humblest home, if it go no further; but it is sure to go further, *i.e.* so long as the night lasts. See how the thousand lights of the city gleam afar in the darkness; if the day were suddenly to break, where would they all be?

"There shall be no night there." A joyful prospect, is it not? But is it altogether so? For those whose lights have been kept trimmed and burning here, it is. But what of those whose light has smoked under a bushel, or died down to ashes? The little candle that might have thrown its beams so far is scarcely worth kindling now, is it? When we shall have left all the naughtiness and all the

darkness of the world behind us, and have entered a land where there is no night, what will it be, suppose you, to think, Here is my light blazing at last, blazing when the day has come; if only I had let it blaze in the night, how many wanderers might I have guided into Christ's way of peace! "Work, for the night is coming." Yes. But more, still more, far more, "Work, for the night is passing." "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; therefore put off the unfruitful works of darkness, and put on the armour of light."

We have spoken of light; we might speak in much the same way of love. This is the great panacea for the world's sin and woe. The light which is mainly needed is the light of love. God needs and can use all the talents of the greatest, but there is one talent, and that the best of them all, which is at the disposal of the weakest. Even where there is little brain power, and little or no money power, there may be great heart power. Of even the three great abiding graces, the greatest is Love. There cannot be more than a few great heads, but there need be no limit to the number of great hearts, so long as the love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of all His people by the Holy Ghost given unto them. And if only they all had the love of Christ filling and constraining them, they could not pass through life without doing something, and not something merely, but much, which the day will declare. For if your hearts be full of

love, your very looks will bear witness to Him who has wreathed your faces in smiles. Your speech also will bewray you, "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Your commonest deeds with "the tincture, for His sake," will have a lustre about them of which the doer will be all unconscious. And then, besides the hallowing of your ordinary doings, you will be sure to find an increasing number of opportunities of serving your Lord in the way of direct effort for the advancement of His Kingdom, and for the good of those whom He loves and longs to save and bless. Your gifts, too, however small, coming from hearts warmed by the Saviour's love, though they may not be worth reporting on earth, will not be forgotten in Heaven; for though money perishes, Love abides for ever. Your cares and sorrows, too, if borne in the spirit of patient, trustful love, shall bring their witness to our Lord; and even though you may have as much to bear as had the Apostle Paul himself, you shall find at the end of it all that it was a good thing to continue so long in a world of sin and suffering; that it is something to be thankful for to all Eternity, that you were permitted not only to work, but also to suffer for His name; and when death comes at last to take you to your rest, you will neither be sorry that he has come so soon, nor regret that he has waited so long, because with the great Apostle you can say: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; hence-

forth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."

It was a great thing to say to the thief on the cross: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." But it was a far greater thing to say, in behalf of the disciples who at that very time were shrinking from the cross they too must bear: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world." The one was taken from the Cross that he might go to Heaven; the others were kept out of Heaven that they might go to their cross—which was the greater honour? Happy, happy are those dear babes who are taken to the heavenly joy while yet they have barely tasted of the world's evil. But happier far shall you and I be if, kept in the world and from its evil through the grace of our great Intercessor's prayer, as fellow-labourers with God, our lights shining in the darkness, we live in the world as Christ was in the world, helping in however feeble measure to bring some of His many sons to glory, and thereby gaining for ourselves some little share in that glory which the Father gave to Him, and in that great joy for which He "endured the cross, despising the shame."

I hope we have all an interest in that later petition of the Intercessor's prayer: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." I

hope that for all of us to depart from this world may be to be with Christ, which is far better. But who would wish to depart even to be with Christ, before his work for Christ was done? Would it not be a sad thing to enter even Heaven's gate with the thought: Here I am at last, redeemed by my Saviour's precious Blood, but without anything to show for my splendid opportunities of service on earth, without any share in that work which the Lord gave His people to do? But how transporting will it be for us, who have been sent into the world as Christ was sent into it, to be able, in leaving it, like Him to say: "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

"Therefore whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest;" or, to give it in the newer, brighter Gospel form: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

II

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT OF ALL

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"And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all?

"And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord:

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."—MARK xii. 28–30.

IT is not difficult to see why an honest and earnest teacher of the Law, as this man evidently was, should be anxious for an authoritative answer to this question. The Law was large and complex. It branched out into such innumerable details that it was clearly impossible for any one to follow it in every particular. If then salvation was to be had by obedience to the Law, which was the prevailing opinion of the time, it could only be by a fair average obedience; in which case it would be a vital question what part of the Law should be most insisted on. It was the function of the scribes and lawyers to explain the Law, and settle questions of conscience; and seeing

no one could be expected to keep it all, it was eminently desirable that they should be able to say what was most essential, so that their disciples might make sure of so much, and then the risk of being rejected for not keeping the rest would be greatly reduced. If one could only be sure of say a single commandment which clearly took precedence of all the rest, one might make a special point of seeing to it, and content himself with doing the best he could with the others. For surely it would be a terrible thing if some punctilious devotee who had tithed his mint and anise and cummin and vexed his soul about a thousand little things, should find at the last that all was in vain because he had overlooked the first and great commandment.

The question ought to be of equal importance to the very large number of people in our day who believe in salvation by the keeping of the Law, or as they would put it, by living good lives. It is generally understood that no one can be perfectly good, that though the Law, as we understand it, is not so encumbered with petty details as it was in the days of the Rabbis, it nevertheless is so comprehensive and so exacting that it is quite impossible for any one to keep it perfectly. If then any one is to be saved by keeping the commandments, it can only be by a fair average obedience. And if this be so, it is as vital a question as ever to determine which is the first commandment of all; for if there be one which takes precedence of all the rest it would never

do to neglect it. It must be the irreducible minimum, the very least which will be expected of those who claim salvation in that way.

We know of course that this is not the way of salvation set forth by Christ and His disciples; but it is the way of salvation believed in by a very large number of intelligent people in our day; I am not sure but if we could investigate the matter thoroughly we should find that it was the view of the majority of people in this land. The Bible is in almost every home in England and in almost every hand (or at all events within the reach of almost every hand); the way of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ is familiar enough so far as mere words are concerned; but when you have the opportunity of discovering the actual belief of the average man—I leave out of account the decided Christian, the man who makes the Bible his daily study, and who lives as in the presence of God day by day — leaving this out and taking the average Englishman who gives very little thought to matters of religion, you will find that in nine cases out of ten his notion is that, while it will no doubt go hard in the next world with very wicked men, the fairly decent and respectable people will be all right. What he believes in is a fair average goodness. He is fully aware of the distinction between right and wrong, and his idea is that if a man is right in the main, the wrong things he does will not be laid up against him. It is the same old idea of salvation by keep-

ing the commandments; not all of them, for that is impossible, but so many of them as to make it evident that he is a good, well-meaning man, and therefore worthy of a good place in the life to come. Again then, I ask, what question could be more vital to persons of that way of thinking than the one put here by the scribe—"Which is the first commandment of all?"

So much for the importance of the question. The next point is, Who is to settle it? This scribe had the idea that Christ could settle it. Do you not think he was right? Could he have gone to any person more competent? Eighteen centuries have passed away from that day to this, and during all this time the claims of Christ to settle such a question have been before the world. How have they stood the test? Have they been weakened in the least? Is there less reason to bow to His authority in the matter now than in that old time when the scribe took the question to Him? On the contrary, the evidence before the world of His title to settle such a question is immeasurably stronger than it was then. Only a few in advance of their time recognised it in these early days. Now it is almost universally acknowledged. For it is not only His disciples now who acknowledge it. They alone may acknowledge His supreme divinity and lordship over the whole of life; but they are by no means alone in acknow-

ledging His claim to be the highest authority on ethical questions. There is scarcely an intelligent unbeliever in the country who would not go so far. I doubt if you could find one such to assert that even this highly enlightened and marvellously developed nineteenth century has produced a man who has a better claim to be heard on the question, "Which is the first commandment of all?" It must be of the greatest importance, then, to have His answer if He will give it. And be it remembered that, when we have acknowledged His competence to deal with the subject, we must not set aside His answer because it does not agree with those given by other authorities of far inferior standing.

For example, if you were to go to some recognised authority in commercial circles, the answer would probably be something like this: Pay your debts; be scrupulously honest: that is the first and great commandment. Let a man only be fairly honest and honourable in all his transactions with his neighbours: that is the main thing —as for the rest, a fair average goodness will be quite sufficient. Or, if you were to address the same question to some leader of fashionable society, the answer would be something like this: Be gentlemanly, or, Be lady-like. Perhaps a French phrase would be convenient, as it certainly would be appropriate: let everything in your appearance, dress, and behaviour be *comme il faut*. If English were preferred, the phrase might be "good

form." That is the first and great commandment. Other sins may be forgiven to you, but a sin against good manners never. Politeness is the first and great commandment of the Law. Or, if you applied in a somewhat better quarter, you might discover that what is called good-heartedness was the first and great commandment of the Law. Suppose the case in consideration were that of some poor fellow terribly given to drink, it would be said: "He harms nobody but himself; he has a very kind heart, and would do anything for a friend." I am not finding fault with such charitable remarks. Drunkenness is bad enough, but it is not so bad as malice; it is not so bad as slander; it is not so bad as taking unfair advantage of your neighbour; but when you go the length of assuming that if only a man is good-hearted, his drunkenness does not matter much, then I should be inclined to raise the question: What authority have you for making good-heartedness the first and great commandment of the Law?

These, then, are some of the answers which inferior authorities are giving to the question. It is time now to inquire what Christ's answer is. It is quite clear, and decided, and explicit: "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment" (verses

29, 30). Though He is only asked for one, He thinks it necessary to mention another, to show that the first could not stand alone. If an irreducible minimum is wanted, it must include two, so he adds this: "And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (verse 31). And in the corresponding passage in Matthew He adds this: "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." So not only do we know from Him which is the first and great commandment and which is the second, also great; but it is intimated that if we only make sure of these, all the rest will follow as a matter of course.

Surely this must be exceedingly satisfactory, to find the whole round of duty put in such a short, simple, and comprehensive form. Surely this ought to make the way of salvation by keeping the commandments very easy indeed. Instead of whole volumes with complicated details and endless questions of casuistry, there are only two sentences, asking two things. Make sure of these and you need vex your soul no more.

Wait a moment: is it so very easy? To simplify the matter let us keep to the first one. Perhaps the best way to test ourselves in this regard will be for us to imagine ourselves now answering at the judgment-seat of Christ. You expect to be saved by a fair average keeping of God's commandments. Well, the first question is of course with the first

and great commandment. How does your life stand according to its requirements? Stop a moment and consider. "Every day of my life my very first duty was to love the Lord my God with all my heart, and soul, and strength, and mind. How many days have I done it?" Remember it will not do to evade the question. It will not do to say, "I was honest, Lord, strictly honest always; I never cheated anybody; I paid my debts, and more than that, I was often kind to people, and always ready to do a good turn to a friend; I was invariably polite, and always acted like a gentleman." That may be all very true; but it is not to the point. The point is, What of the first and great commandment? Did you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength?

Then the terrible thought comes: "There were days when I scarcely ever thought of God at all. There were times when I thought hardly of Him, so hardly that I was glad to get rid of the thought of Him. There were times when I put the thought of Him out of my mind, for no other reason than because I did not want to do what He told me, or because I wanted to do what He forbade me. I cannot really recall a single day when I could honestly say that I loved Him with all my heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." And all the time it was written down in your New Testament, that Christ, whom everybody acknowledged to be the best authority on the subject, had said that this was the first and great

commandment, this commandment which you never kept, which most of the time you never thought of keeping, or made any attempt to keep? What can you say for yourself?

"Oh, I did not know, at least I did not think of it. The people among whom I lived did not make much of it. They made a great deal of honesty, and kindness, and politeness; but they did not seem to make anything of this. I do not think any one ever did it."

Yes, there was One who did it. His name was Jesus. If you had read the story of His life with any attention, you would have seen that His Father in Heaven was never out of His mind. And He never thought hard thoughts of Him, and never rebelled against His will. It was, indeed, His meat and His drink, as He said, His daily, hourly delight, to do His Father's will, even when the doing of that will led Him into trouble and darkness, into anguish and death. *He* did love the Lord His God with all His heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.

And those who thoroughly believed in Him learned to do it too—not quite perfectly indeed, but in such a way that there could be no mistake about it. Read the letters and study the life of the apostle Paul as an example of it. You cannot fail to notice that his Lord was always uppermost in his thoughts; his life consisted in doing His will, his mind was always turning to Him, his heart was always full of zeal for

the glory of His name and the bringing in of His kingdom.

And there were other people you had heard of and read of, perhaps some of your own acquaintance, who seemed to have the thought of God's presence almost always with them, and to find satisfaction and delight in the thought; people who, instead of hard thoughts of Him, had trustful, loving thoughts—thoughts of Him as a Father, and Friend, and Saviour—and were really anxious first to know and then to do His will. So not only was there one person who perfectly kept this commandment, but there were a number of others who somehow or other got the secret of it from Him.

Do you not think there would be something in all this to open your eyes, and lead you to say something like this: "If I had only thought that this was really the first and great commandment, and noticed that I was not keeping it at all, I should have listened to the voice of Christ as I never did, I should have discovered that He had the secret of it, that the worldly people of my acquaintance were wrong and He was right, and I should have come to Him and sat at His feet and learned His secret."

You see, of course, why I take this subject, and why I try to press it home. It is that no one here may leave that discovery to be made on the Day of Judgment, when it is too late; that you may make it now; that you may realise now that the first and great commandment of the Law is one which you

have never kept, which you never can keep of yourself, and that your hope of salvation is in the One Man who has the mighty secret, which, happily, is an open secret—the open secret of salvation through His Cross and by His Spirit. Go to Him with the confession of your sins, and He will show you first the way of forgiveness for all the past, then the way of peace, and finally the way of love and life. To assure you of forgiveness He will point you to His wounds, and say: "This is My body which was broken for you; this is My blood which was shed for you, for the remission of sins." To show you the way of deliverance He will tell you of the victory He has gained over your enemies, and of the right He has acquired to give the Holy Spirit to all who are willing to come into touch with Him, to lay their lives alongside of His. That is what faith means. It means the touch of your spirit with His; and as soon as this is brought about, His Spirit begins to flow into you, and the love of God is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost given unto you. Then the keeping of the first and great commandment will begin to come easy and natural to you, and presently you will be relieving your heart in some such words as these: "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, O God, and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides Thee." Thus the first and great commandment will begin to be wrought into your soul; and the second will follow it closely, for when the love of God is shed abroad in your heart it will affect you in your

whole life, in relation to your brother on earth as well as to your Father in heaven. The whole set of your soul will be upwards towards God, and outwards towards your fellow-men; and the great question will no longer be, What is the least that I must do? but, What is the most that I can do, for Him who has done all and suffered all for me, and shown me the way of love and life eternal?

III

A NEW CREATION

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A NEW CREATION

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."—2 Cor. v. 17.

There is a tone of surprise in this sentence we are apt to miss by our rather tame rendering. The literal translation is this, "If any man be in Christ, a new creation!" (see R.V., margin). The abruptness indicates the marvel, and suggests a mark of exclamation. The same feeling is further indicated by the word "behold" in the next line: "*Behold*, all things are made new."

It is the marvel of conversion. The apostle knew it well from his own experience. It was not evolution which made old Saul into new Paul. It was revolution. It was new creation. It was the forth-putting of divine power by the risen Christ. This is a miracle which has not ceased. It is not so apparent indeed in every case. There was no such violent upturning and reversal of the past in the case of Timothy; for, from a child he had known the Scriptures and been all the while

under the best influences. And in Christian circles the Timothy type of conversion is likely to be the prevailing one. Still, we have all known cases as sudden and signal as that of Saul of Tarsus. I heard the other day an address from the Rev. Mr. Laws of New Guinea, who has given his life to the evangelisation of the islands to the north of Australia. Among other examples he instanced Savage Island, so called from the unparalleled savagery of its inhabitants, drawing a contrast between its condition when first he saw it, when the appropriateness of its name was only too obvious to every one who touched upon its shores, and as it is now—its people all clothed, their savagery gone, the miserable huts replaced by neat plaster houses, the people a church-going and Bible-loving people, and fairly civilised. After speaking of such changes as these, he said with great emphasis: "If Christianity is not of God, the marvel is greater still, for there is some power working in the world which we cannot understand or explain, which connects itself with the name of God, and seems so evidently to come from Him, and yet does not." The sentence sent a thrill through the large audience, for after the facts he had recounted the force of it was irresistible. It was the same old marvel of the apostle, "A new creation!" The finger of God!

The surprise of the apostle at the marvel of conversion proves that he was no more ready than

we are to accept the extraordinary without looking for its antecedent cause. Though the principle of continuity, of which we hear so much in these days, was not laid down with the same clearness as now, it was tacitly assumed by all intelligent people, so that a breach of continuity—the coming in of something new for which a natural antecedent could not be found—awakened astonishment and gave rise to earnest thought. The idea of creation in the beginning was familiar enough to them, but "a new creation" was something to be questioned and scrutinised.

The new creation he connects with being "in Christ." It is a change which he has just described as amounting to this, that those who have passed through it "live henceforth not unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again" (verse 15). It is a shifting of the centre of life from self to Christ—from self on earth to Christ in heaven. The immediate effect of this is that the Spirit of Christ obtains control of the life. A divine power flows into it, renewing it so completely that it is a new creation.

The new creation refers primarily to the change within, and it is no doubt to mark this that even the Revised Version retains in the text the word "creature," because the word "creation" (which is put in the margin as the more literal translation) is apt to be understood rather of what is without and around. I do not suggest that we should

exclude this idea altogether. For when the great change takes place, even the face of nature has a different look: there is a new glory in the heavens and a new beauty on the earth; the light that never was on sea or land begins to dawn. If we bear this in mind, there may be no harm in the twofold significance of the word creation. There are, in fact, three great stages in conversion: first, a shifting of the centre of life from self to Christ; next, renewal of life as the immediate result; and finally, renewal of the very environment. That this large view is in the apostle's mind seems evident from the way in which he develops the thought: "Old things are passed away; behold, *all things* are become new." Let us keep, then, to the wide word, "a new creation."

I

With this large outlook we are tempted to use as an illustration the revolution in science which is associated with the name of Copernicus. It was a similar shifting of the centre from earth to heaven; and the result of it was a new creation, a universe totally different from what had been known, or even imagined, before. Up to this time it had been taken for granted that the earth was the centre of the universe, and on that false assumption there had been built up a vast science of astronomy (which, be it remembered, the scientific men of the time

accepted as correct), a science which was no mere guess-work, for it was based on observations which had been most carefully made and diligently recorded for centuries. The intricacies of that old Ptolemaic system of the universe seem absurd enough to us now; but all its spheres, and cycles, and epicycles, and deferents had a strong foundation on exceedingly patient and careful observations of the motions of the heavenly bodies as taken from the earth.

As taken from the earth—there lay the whole fallacy. But one might ask, where else can you take them? Erect the highest Eiffel Tower on the top of the loftiest mountain, and still you take your observations from the earth. To which Copernicus replied: Nevertheless, so long as you take your observations from the earth, you are all wrong; for it is not the centre. The true centre is the sun, and though you cannot put your observatory in the sun, you can go there by faith; you can take your station there mentally even if you cannot bodily, and then out of old chaos will at once come new order. It was a revolution. The old Ptolemaic system was overthrown; and those who accepted the new Copernican faith saw a new creation: old things had passed away; behold, all things were made new! Astronomically there was a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelt the simple harmony of the divine order in place of the intricacies and involutions of man's

invention. From that time astronomers knew the earth no more as their centre of observation and reasoning; thenceforth their point of view was forever shifted to the sun. Such was the great scientific revolution which has been the starting-point of all sound astronomy.

The analogy is sufficiently obvious. The apostle is thinking of another sun, the Sun of Righteousness, risen on the world with healing in His wings; is thinking of the risen Christ as the new and heavenly centre of life for all who believe in Him. Observe what he has just been saying about Him: "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." What is the point of that remark? It is this: to know Christ after the flesh, to love Him only as a man, was no shifting of the centre of life. It was only adding another to the many earthly affections already in force. But to follow the risen Christ, now in heaven, shining there as the "Sun of Righteousness," to make Him, now that He has returned to His Father and resumed His divine glory, the object of affection and devotion, is to find a new centre for life, heavenly in place of earthly, divine instead of human—it is to make a change of the same kind in the spiritual sphere as Copernicus made in the intellectual sphere when he bade farewell to the earth as the centre of his thought, and as an astronomer took up his permanent abode in the sun.

We shall be able to enter into the apostle's thought if we consider the difference between what Christ is to him now and what He was to him in the old persecuting days. In those old days Jesus of Nazareth was to him a mere atom of humanity, a single individual out of countless multitudes who had lived and suffered and died upon the earth, and not even that any longer, for he was blotted out by death, nothing remaining of him but the mere empty name of a dead impostor, made use of by some superstitious people to attempt to overturn the time-honoured fabric of the Hebrew faith. What is He now? Atom of humanity? No: the Very God. He is the sun in the heavens, the centre of all light, and life, and love, and power.

Recall that journey to Damascus. As Saul left Jerusalem by the old Damascus road, he would pass close by the place where the body of Jesus had been laid. As he passed he would no doubt think to himself, what poor deluded creatures those people must be to imagine that man to be living yet! Perhaps he cast a stone in the direction of the grave, as the Jews were in the habit of doing at the grave of Absalom, and walked on more determined than ever to root out the silly and pernicious superstition from the land. On he goes, mile after mile, till not only the little grave, but the great city is out of sight. So he travels on day after day, till at last, having passed along the flank of mighty Hermon, he is nearing Damascus. Up there is

the sun: for it is midday. But suddenly there is another Sun in the heavens, with a light so far above the brightness of the natural sun that it first dazzles and then blinds him. And out of this blinding light there comes a voice, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" The voice has in it a tone of authority which touches his conscience, of tender pleading too which reaches his heart, so that he stammers out: "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

So Jesus is risen, as He said, and as His disciples say. He is not in the grave beside the Damascus road; He is in heaven. This other sun, then, is indeed the Sun of the soul, and those who make Him the centre of their life are not the fools I thought them. If they are "beside themselves, it is to God" (verse 13). Eccentric they certainly seem to be, as judged by earthly rules. But what is eccentric on earth may be concentric in heaven.

From that moment—from the moment that the light above the brightness of the sun shone upon the spirit of Saul—he ceased to identify Christ with the flesh He had worn on earth, and now identified Him with the God over all whom in that flesh He had revealed. And now in making the Christ whom he had despised the centre of his life, round which it all revolved, His will its law, His glory its aim, His smile its light, His love its motive power—if he was reproached by others with being

eccentric, he was content to be able to say: "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God."

II

But is it not possible to make God the centre of our life without help from Christ? Faith in Christ is necessary, you say; why not faith in God at once? This may seem reasonable, and so it might be but for certain obstacles.

There is, first, the obstacle which in our day has received scientific recognition in the somewhat learned word "Agnosticism." "Who can by searching find out God?" The agnostics are quite right in saying that the knowledge of God is beyond our unaided faculties. But it is nothing new. The Bible says the same thing—always has said it. Hence the need of Christ as the revelation of God. Though no man hath seen, nor can see God at any time, the only-begotten Son has revealed Him. Thus the first obstacle is met.

Then there is the obstacle of guilt. Not only is there a barrier in the intellect but in the conscience. Even if our intellectual powers were adequate to the apprehension of God, guilt and condemnation would be an insuperable obstacle. But just as the intellectual difficulty is met by the Incarnation, so the moral difficulty is met by the Atonement. There is mystery in it, as there is in all the ways of God. But just as by the Incar-

nation countless multitudes have been led to a practical knowledge of God, which would have been otherwise quite impossible, so by the Atonement have countless multitudes been reconciled to God, so that they enjoy peace of conscience, and know as a fact of joyful experience that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Thus the second obstacle is met.

There is an obstacle not only in the intellect, and in the conscience, but in the heart—the obstacle of earthliness. Our affections have been so set on things below that it has become a habit, which of our own power we cannot shake off. We may know that the sun is the centre of our system; but the earth is so near and the sun so far that the earthly attraction has it all its own way; and if no power from above counteracts it for us, we are still under the dominion of those desires and affections which led us into sin before, and will again. This obstacle is also removed through Christ. Just as the Incarnation meets our agnosticism, and the Atonement our guilt, so the Resurrection of Christ, followed by the outpouring of His Spirit, meets our spiritual deadness.

Thus our threefold need is met. I must see God; and I do see Him in the Person of His Son. I must be at peace with God; and this comes through the Cross of Christ. I must love God; and this I can do by the Spirit of Christ. It all comes through my seeing, accepting, loving God in Christ.

III

The short phrase "*in Christ*" is more fully explained in other parts of the Apostle's writings to be such union with Him as to involve our being crucified with Him, dead, buried, risen, ascended with Him. But what does all this mean? To understand these mystical terms fully, one would need to pass through the experience of which they are the expression. But something may be said by way of indicating the direction in which to look for the explanation.

It is necessary, as we have seen, in order to the new life of heavenly devotion, that the affections be shifted from earth to heaven, from self to God. How is it to be done? It is easy to say, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind"; but how can I do it? I cannot force myself to love anybody. I cannot even force myself to love a good man. How then can I get to love God, who seems so far away, so impalpable that I cannot grasp Him, so much offended that I dare not approach Him, and so completely out of the sphere of my ordinary life that all human ways of winning my love are impossible on account of the infinite distance between Him and me?

Now, it is perfectly true that under these conditions it is impossible that there should be awakened in any human heart love enough to God to counter-

balance the earthly affection. But see how it is all met in Christ. Christ is "God manifest in the flesh," so that He can and does come close enough to make it possible for Him to win our affection. And this He does by the beauty of His character, by the tenderness of His heart, by the constancy of His love, by His giving up everything for us, and, above all, by His agony and death for us, to take away our sin, to rescue us from death, to redeem our lives from destruction and to crown us with loving-kindness and tender mercies—thus it is that He draws His people to Him with the bonds of an affection which easily becomes paramount and supreme. Those who yield themselves to it are drawn to Him so closely that, spiritually, they are one with Him, just as the true wife is one with the husband, whom she loves with all her heart, so thoroughly one with him that what the husband suffers she suffers—she is sick with him, she is pained with him, she is feverish with him, and if he die she dies with him—not literally, of course, but spiritually and really, how really let her altered life after the great crisis only too truthfully tell; and oh, how much of her heart goes after him to the heaven where he is gone!

So it is that, if we are only Christ's people, we enter spiritually into "the fellowship of His sufferings," so that we are crucified with Him, dead with Him, buried with Him, and rise with Him, finding it a second nature thereafter to set our affections on things above. That is what the apostle means when,

after speaking of the Risen Christ, he says: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." His agnosticism is gone; his guilt and condemnation are gone; his bondage to lust and passion has gone; his heart is set on higher things; God is now the centre of his life, and not only is he himself a new creature, but there is around him a new creation. Earth is much smaller than it used to be, and the infinities of the great universe of God begin to open out to his spirit, even as they began to open out to the intellect of the astronomers, after they followed Copernicus to the new centre he had found in the sun.

The subject grows, but time dwindles, so I must leave it now with only two closing words, which shall be as practical as I can make them.

The first, to those of you who do not call yourselves Christians. I assume that you are not satisfied with yourselves, that you feel the need of some improvement, some considerable improvement, perhaps not in your outward conduct particularly, but in the region of the conscience and the heart. Well, what is your hope? Is it of gradual improvement? Are you trusting to the slow evolution of a noble character? But now, how is it getting on? Are you satisfied with your progress? If you go on at the same rate, do you expect to be all right in twenty years, or in what time? Ah! my friend, *are* you satisfied? Have you not been disappointed by the attempts you have made? Is not the evolution too

slow? And are you quite sure it is not a going down rather than getting up? Do you not think you want a revolution? That is just what you want. You want a shifting of the centre of your life from yourself to God. You cannot do it for yourself, not if you work at it for fifty years. But Christ can do it for you. That is what He has come for. Accept Him, yield to the drawing of His affection, so that you get into sympathy with Him, so that His heavenly grace can reach you and fill you, and the thing is done; and thereafter you will need no expositor to tell you what the apostle meant when he said: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

The other word will be to Christians. Are you sure that you *are* Christians? Remember, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature"; are you sure you are a new creature? The question is not whether you have experienced a great and sudden change like that which passed upon Saul of Tarsus. The question is not as to the rapidity with which the transition was made from the earth centre to the sun centre, but whether it has been made at all. Is Christ, indeed, the centre of your life? Is it your desire to do His will? Is it your ambition to serve Him faithfully? Is it a great sorrow to you when you grieve Him? After all wanderings and falls, do you come back to Him and renew your covenant, and make Him again the sun of your soul? If so,

then you are in Christ, and it only remains for you to "abide in Him." But if you seldom think of Him; if, while you are careful not to offend your neighbours, you are never troubled with the thought of grieving Him; if you are so engrossed with your business as a mere paying (or losing) concern that the thought of serving the Lord in it never enters your mind; if your life still centres in self, and your affections are set on the things of earth, then you are no Christian, and you have need to begin just as the agnostic or the common sinner has to begin, by welcoming God in Christ, accepting His atonement, burying your selfishness in His grave, and rising with Him in spirit to newness of life; for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

IV

THE GAMUT OF GRACES

NOTE.—*This sermon was included in forgetfulness of its having been issued as a tract by the Religious Tract Society. It is with their kind consent that it is retained.*

IV

THE GAMUT OF GRACES

'Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."—2 PET. i. 5–7.

"GOD hath called us unto holiness." But what is holiness? We have all an idea what it means, and yet we should find it hard to define it. It seems to be not so much any particular quality or grace, as a something diffused all through the life which is the result of the development in harmonious proportion of all the graces. The Greek word for holiness has a different thought in it, but our English word is etymologically connected with "wholeness," completeness: so that the idea of rounded symmetry of character is suggested as its basis. From this it follows that holiness is not something which can be directly cultivated by itself. To cultivate holiness we must cultivate all those excellences which enter into the complete symmetrical Christian character. They are summed up for us very beautifully and completely in our text.

One can see at a glance the beauty and excellence of the character set forth in this circle of attainments; and therefore it is a very useful passage even to the casual reader. But besides what lies on the surface, there are many things worth examining; and therefore it may repay us if we devote some time to looking closely at it.

Observe the order, looking first at the beginning and the end of the series. It begins with *faith* and ends with *love*. It begins with faith —why? Because faith is the foundation of all; it is the soil out of which all the flowers of grace grow. Faith is at all the springs of action in our life. It is for this reason, and no other, that faith is so much insisted on in the Gospel, never as a matter of opinion, but always as the ground of action, the foundation on which the structure of life is built. Hence faith is here taken, not simply as co-ordinate with the others, but as something already present, to which the others must all be added. Then the series ends with love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "The end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned." How beautifully consistent is Scripture with itself; and in nothing more so than in this, that faith is always represented as the foundation of character, and love as its consummation.

Look now at the links between. Links, we say,

though there is little in the Authorised Version to suggest the idea. The thought there is simply that of adding, so that the different virtues might be supposed to stand together in a row, like balls or blocks, without being fastened to one another. But we see by looking at the Revised Version that the preposition *in* is used all through the series; so that the idea of successive links is in this way plainly suggested. Each grace is firmly linked into that which goes before, so that we have not a mere series, but a chain. The practical difference will be at once evident. You may leave out one of a *series* and retain the rest. Your series is defective, but that is all; and if, for instance, only one number is omitted, it may look pretty well, and the casual observer might not notice the fault. But drop one link in a *chain* and it is spoilt. Christian character is not a loose and variable aggregation of excellences; it is a closely-compacted whole.

Let us now examine somewhat closely these intervening links between faith at the beginning and love at the end. There is a certain vagueness in some of the English words that keeps us from getting at the precise idea without some explanation. We shall endeavour to remove this vagueness, and to reach a clear comprehension of each link in the chain.

Next to faith, and linked firmly into it, is "*virtue*." Our modern use of the word virtue is

quite indefinite, so that to many readers "add to your faith virtue," means nothing more than "add to faith goodness," a term so large that if understood in this sense we might stop there and let the series end, for it already includes everything. But the old "virtue," corresponding to the Latin *virtus*, was not a word implying general goodness, but a specific term which is often fairly enough translated "courage." But the word "courage" again is rather narrow. It is only at times that courage is called into request, whereas the virtue the apostle has in view is always in request. It is that practical energy[1] which resides in the will, and which is necessary to carry faith into action. We may, for convenience, call it *the grace of doing*. "Faith cometh by hearing"; but there are many who hear and fail to do, for want of this practical energy, this determination which leads on to action. It is the practical, as distinguished from the speculative or the sentimental spirit. A moment's consideration will show that this is the first link in the formation of character upon faith; and it is for want of it that we have so many sad illustrations of "faith without works." We may deal with divine truth in the way of speculation, and our characters be no better for it. That is for want of this "virtue." We may deal with divine truth and even with divine love in the way of

[1] Bengel gives, as equivalent of the Greek ἀρετή, "strenuus animi tonus ac vigor."

sentiment, and yet be no better for it. That is for want of this "virtue." But when we have this energy of the soul, this practical determination, then we have a strong bridge between believing and good living, between faith and works. The first and most important link then is this practical energy, this grace of doing.

The next is *the grace of seeing*. Add "to virtue *knowledge*." It is evident that practical and not speculative knowledge is meant—knowledge in its relation to character. And what is knowledge in respect to character? Is it not discrimination? Many a man who is practical enough and energetic enough, loses all the good of his energy for want of discrimination. He has zeal, "but not according to knowledge." Hence to practical energy there must be added practical wisdom. Some may think it strange that this does not come before the other; but a little reflection will show that it is in its proper place. For it is just in proportion as we show an obedient spirit that we shall have an enlightened spirit. "If any man will do," *i.e.* is willing to do (which is just this grace of doing of which we have been speaking) "His will, he shall know of the doctrine" (which is just this grace of seeing, the next link of the chain).

I have been interested to find in the work of an acute modern writer on ethics a discussion on the nature of the moral agent, in which he treats first of the springs of action, next of the arbiters

or executors of action, and last of the guides of action. The analysis is based on logic simply, without any reference to the Scriptures; and for this reason it is interesting to note the correspondence. The springs of action first—that is the region of faith; the arbiters or executors of action next—here is the practical energy called "virtue" in the text; the guides of action follow, corresponding to the knowledge here spoken of. First, the grace of doing founded on our believing; and then the grace of seeing. And in fact it is of importance to remember that unless we have the former link, the will to do, there cannot really be the latter; and that is the reason why so many people who think themselves Christians can go on doing things and living in a way that any one else can see is un-Christian, and yet never suspect it themselves. For want of the grace of doing they lose the grace of seeing.[1]

Let us look now at the next pair of graces, *temperance* and *patience*. The word "temperance" has in modern times become narrowed, just as the word "virtue" has become extended in meaning. Most people understand it now in relation to one sin, which is called "the sin of intemperance," viz. drunkenness; but it need scarcely be said that while it of course applies to that sin, it does not apply to it alone; it is temperance in all

[1] See 2 Pet. i. 9.

things. The best word perhaps is *self-control.* It is the grace of abstaining from all kinds of evil to which we are tempted; of holding back when lust urges us to go forward. And certainly we all find it hard enough in some direction or other. It may be very easy for me to "hold back" from the use of intoxicating drinks if I have no temptation in that direction. It does not follow that it is easy to abstain from hasty words or from angry feelings. But to give way to the latter would be just as much a breach of self-control as to yield to the former.

What is the reason that self-control is so hard to many of us? It is a trite saying that only the man who has learned how to obey is able to command. And this is manifestly true of self-government. A man who has not that spirit of obedience which constitutes the first link after faith will certainly not have that self-control which constitutes the third.

This leads us to notice what an abuse of language, or rather confusion of thought, it is, to call a selfish man a man of strong will, as is so often done. The truth is that such persons are the men of weak will. What is strong in them is not their will, but their passions, and it is just because their passions are so much stronger than their will or their wit (virtue or knowledge), that you cannot do anything with them. But if a man really have the strong will implied in the "virtue," and the

strong wit indicated in the "knowledge" of the text, he will certainly have "self-control" enough not to act like a spoilt child because he cannot have his own way.

"And to self-control, *patience*": patient and steadfast endurance as opposed to impatience, fickleness, and changeableness. The former, temperance, has to do with the control of that which is within us; the latter, patience, has to do with the control of that which is without us, our circumstances. A man without self-control is at the mercy of his lusts within him; a man without patience is at the mercy of circumstances. The relation between the two is very apparent, and perhaps we may express it by saying that while the former is the grace of *holding back*, the latter is the grace of *holding on*. The one holds back when lust urges on, the other holds on when vexations and annoyances threaten to move us from our equanimity or steadfastness. Now it is quite evident that patience is closely linked in self-control, and in the graces that go before. Who are the patient ones? Those who have learned to exercise self-control, through the power of a faith-governed will and under the guidance of an enlightened conscience. Who are the impatient, irritable, fickle, complaining ones? Those whose wills are weak, whose sense is small, and whose passions defy control.

Notice here as a practical point, how patience must be a plant of slow growth. You cannot

summon it up when you want it. You cannot make up your mind all at once, "I will be patient to-day," and then certainly be so. No; your patience must be linked in self-control. And your self-control, as we have seen, must be linked in those elements of character which precede it in the chain.

We come now to the closing group, a group of three—*godliness*, *brotherly kindness*, *charity*. This is perhaps the best time to notice the relation of the groups to each other. The first two—the "virtue" and the "knowledge," the will and the wit, the grace of doing and the grace of seeing—are fundamental qualities which, with the faith to which they are closely linked, lie at the foundation of character. The next two—temperance and patience, self-control and steadfastness, the grace of holding back and the grace of holding on—belong to the management of ourselves. It will be observed, however, that they are only negative. The one is the grace of abstaining; that is, not doing what lust or passion prompts us to do, not allowing lust to control us. The other is the grace of not allowing circumstances to control us. The three that remain and close the series supply the positive elements of character; and they include respectively our relations to God, to our fellow-Christians, and to all mankind—godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity.

Now there is an easy kind of godliness, brotherly

kindness, and charity which is not connected with self-control and patience, or with any of the links that have gone before. There is a godliness which a man may be conscious of, when all is serene in his life, but which disappears in the face of temptation or trial. How often have you been in a calm and apparently heavenly frame of mind for five minutes, ten minutes, twenty minutes at a time. Why not longer? Simply because the first annoyance you encountered drove it all away. That is not the right kind of godliness. It is not snatches of godliness, but abiding godliness that is expected, amid the frettings that come into our home life, through the cares of business, in weakness and weariness, and even amid the strife of tongues, which is the hardest test of all; and such godliness there cannot be apart from self-control and patience. "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man; Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

Then there is an easy kind of brotherly kindness which consists in loving and being generous to those of the brethren who are particularly lovable. But "if you love those that love you, what thank have ye?" Or if you love those whom nobody can help loving, what thank have ye? But how do you get on with the brethren who are cantankerous and disagreeable, who misunderstand you and fail to appreciate you? To carry brotherly kindness that length

(and it is not brotherly kindness, but mere friendship, if you do not) will require a large degree of the grace of self-control and of the grace of patience.

And if this be true of brotherly kindness, much more is it true of charity, which means love to all men, among whom are included not only persons who have that in them or about them which naturally excites contempt or disgust, but even those who hate us and do all manner of evil against us. Ah, it is appropriate that this hardest grace of all should stand at the end of the list. Some people think it clearly impossible. But they forget or do not know that "all things are possible to him that believeth"; but possible only if to his faith he add these other links of the golden chain of character, without which no one can reach that lovely crowning grace of "charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Now is not this a golden chain? Did you ever see its equal anywhere? Some people have tried to throw this second Epistle of Peter out of the New Testament, on the ground of insufficient evidence of canonicity. But is there not enough in this single passage to show that we have not here the word of man only, but of God, that word which is "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart"?

Some of the common virtues, such as honesty and

truthfulness, are not in the list; but why not? Because they are not needed. The graces in the list touch all the springs of honesty and truthfulness, and of every other grace. Do you think a person who had all these graces could be capable of anything approaching to dishonesty or deceit? When rightly understood, every one of the graces in the list cuts at the root of dishonesty and deceit and every evil thing. Yes, "if these things be in you and abound," —wrought in you by the Holy Ghost, whose is every thought of holiness, you will be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

At this point there is suggested a beauty in the passage which we have not yet noticed, and which indeed is veiled in the English. In the original the word translated "add" is not the common word, but a technical term borrowed from the language of the Greek theatre, meaning to furnish the chorus; so that to the minds of many of those to whom the words were first addressed, the thought might have been suggested that these graces would come into the life *like a chorus.* They would come singing and dancing into it, filling it with joy and loveliest music. A saint of old thus carolled: "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." And here in the New Testament we have the Christian graces introduced as a chorus into life, which would be dull and flat and discordant without them.

We have spoken of the series, and we found it

was better to call it a chain, and now may we not better still call it a *Gamut of Graces?* There is just the right number for the musical scale. Faith is the foundation of all, the keynote to which all the other notes are musically related. Advancing up the scale, we have found it natural to pause at the third and the fifth, as in the common diatonic scale; and then at the upper octave we have the glorious grace of love, tuned in unison to faith, but sounding high above it.

Have we not often wondered how endless the variety of music that can be won from the simple scale of seven with its octaves? As endless is the variety of soul-music that will flow from this simple scale of grace. And nothing but music will come from it. From a musical instrument quite correctly tuned, and on which the scale is faultless, the most discordant noises may be produced; but this cannot be in the spiritual sphere. Given the gamut of graces, and all discord is banished from the life. Life will become one continual song, not always in the major mode, but perhaps most beautiful of all when it modulates into the minor in life's dark days; but a song it shall be from beginning to end, from the keynote and starting-point of Faith swelling onward and forward till it closes in the grand finale of the upper octave Love.

V

PRAYER IN ITS RELATION TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

V

PRAYER IN ITS RELATION TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

"I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."—JOHN xiv. 6.

"Through Him we both have our access by one Spirit unto the Father."—EPH. ii. 18.

PRAYER is the breath of spiritual life. As our bodies are in an atmosphere of air, our spirits are in an environment of God; and the source and secret of life in each case is inspiration. When you wish to know if there is any life left in the body of your dying friend, you hold a mirror beside the mouth and watch to see if there is any film of moisture on it. Why? Because the presence or absence of life is decided by the presence or absence of breathing. It is not a question of the supply of air. That is practically infinite. It is a question of whether the supply is used. A corpse takes none of it. "Behold, he prayeth"—so the Lord Jesus intimated to His servant Ananias the change which had taken place in Saul of Tarsus. "Behold, he prayeth." There is breath in him. He is dead no longer. He is alive unto God. It follows that no

subject is more important than the subject of prayer, no exercise more essential than the exercise of prayer. No prayer, no life; little prayer, little life; much prayer, much life; all prayer, abounding, overflowing life.

Nothing is simpler than prayer—in theory; but few things more difficult in practice.

> "What various hindrances we meet
> In coming to the mercy-seat."

And these difficulties are felt not only by thoughtless people who have no desire for anything better than this world can afford them; they are felt by thoughtful, serious-minded people, and that so strongly sometimes that many, even of those who have been taught at a mother's knee to pray, and who moreover revere their mother's memory so much that they would willingly keep up the dear custom, have felt themselves constrained to discontinue the practice, because they found in it no true inspiration, only a repetition of lifeless forms. If such cases as these were closely examined, it would be found that the difficulties which have proved the death of prayer have been those which an intelligent faith in the doctrine of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—would have effectually removed, and would now remove. To make this clear, let us try to set before our minds as clearly as possible the chief hindrances to prayer in the way of serious-minded people.

The great, the haunting question is—Is it of any use? And if we inquire how it comes to pass that many estimable and earnest people seem to reach a negative answer, we shall find three great reasons for it, which we shall endeavour to deal with in succession.

I

The first is doubt of God; not as to His being—that is very rare—but as to His heart. Can we say, "Our Father which art in heaven"? *Is there a Father to pray to?*

We interrogate Nature, and the answer comes back, "He is Force." The answer is true, and cannot be gainsaid; but is it the whole answer? If it be, prayer is gone, for Force is deaf as a stone. We admit that few in our days are content with this answer, or imagine that it is the whole of the truth. Thirty years ago it seemed as if physical science was determined to annex the whole domain of spirit; but the attempt has failed entirely. But though Materialism as a theory of the universe is practically dead in this country, it still lives as a spirit, and perhaps it would not be too much to say that it lives as the spirit of the age. Never before in the history of the world has there been such a marvellous development in things material, such an enlargement of the life that finds scope and exercise in that which ministers to the satisfaction of the body. Hence practical Materialism abounds on

every side. And in such an atmosphere prayer cannot live. You cannot make money by it; you cannot secure success in the pursuit of an earthly ambition by it. What then can be the use of it?

Here is the sad secret of much discontinued prayer. It is not that these persons have come to the deliberate conclusion that they have no Father in heaven, that God is only the abstract idea of material force. What has happened has been this: there was a time when there was a much larger portion of their life in the sphere of the unseen than there is now. Then they found it possible to pray; not only so, but it would have disturbed them very much to be any considerable time without prayer. But, as years went on, they lived less and less in the world of spirit, and more and more in the world of sense. They became engrossed in worldly pursuits, taken up with earthly ambitions, harassed with temporal cares, until they became so thoroughly identified with the things which are seen and temporal that the things which are unseen and eternal were little by little pushed out of their daily life. They thought less and less about them, cared less and less for them; and as a result of this—not the cause of it, remember, but the result—they believed less and less in them. So God became more and more shadowy to them, and abstract and distant, until the idea of His Fatherhood, though never entirely surrendered in theory, became so vague and uncertain that it ceased to have any practical

influence on their life; and so they found themselves quite unable to say from their heart, "Our Father which art in heaven." Hence the need of a strong and vivid revelation of the Father.

Before we consider how the need is supplied, let us deal with another of the special hindrances in our time to the realisation of the Fatherhood of God. We have said that there are now comparatively few theoretical Materialists, that there are very few who think of God as only Force. The great majority, even of those who have doubts of God, admit that He is not mere Force, but also Mind. That is a distinct advance; yet it gives no basis for prayer—the infinite Mind is at such a hopeless distance from my puny intelligence. Listen to one who seems to aspire in our day to be the poet of agnosticism :—

> "And dreaming much, I never dare
> To dream that in my prisoned soul
> The flutter of a trembling prayer
> Can move the mind that is the whole."

Certainly, if you cannot think of Him as other than Mind. And the trouble is that every new discovery of science, by which our conceptions of the greatness of God are enlarged, seems to put Him at a farther distance. Some people think that if you only recognise intelligence and design in creation you have got everything. Why, it

seems rather to put us farther away as we grow in knowledge. Listen to our poet again on the subject of the recently "Lost Eden," by which he means the exploded idea of fellowship with God:—

> "But yesterday was man from Eden driven.
> His dream wherein he dreamed himself the first
> Of creatures fashioned for eternity—
> This was the Eden that he shared with Eve."

And then he goes on to explain that by Eve he means the adventurous soul within him, which by eating of the tree of scientific knowledge of the nineteenth century, "whose fruit is disenchantment and the perishing of many glorious errors," he is driven out of his paradise of prayer, because "an imperative world-thirst drove him forth, and the gold gates of Eden clanged behind. Never to return," he goes on to say:—

> "Never shall he return; for he hath sent
> His spirit abroad among the infinitudes,
> And may no more to the ancient pales recall
> The travelled feet. But oftentimes he feels
> The intolerable vastness bow him down,
> The awful homeless spaces scare his soul."

Thus "he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow," especially the sorrow of lengthening distance from God. On the intellectual side, the gulf between God and man has been widening, widening terribly, in the whole course of this nineteenth century, and never more than now; so that

it is getting more and more difficult for those who think of God merely as Mind to believe in prayer.

But what if there be a heart in God? There is no intellectual chasm on earth which the human heart cannot bridge. The great prime minister who wields the power of the greatest empire of the world will not consult the little crossing-sweeper on affairs of state; but when the poor boy is lying on his bed in pain, see him there at his side, speaking as tenderly to him as if he were a little prince. And do you think less of him for doing it? On the basis of intellect they are worlds apart; but on the basis of heart the prime minister is as near to the little crossing-sweeper as to any of his colleagues in the Cabinet—nearer, perhaps. What was the lost Eden, again? The Eden "where man dreamed himself the first of creatures fashioned for eternity." We might indeed question whether science does not confirm rather than refute the belief that man is the crown of creation—or of evolution—be it as you will; but we do not insist on this. We prefer to ask if it is quite necessary in order to a belief in prayer to dream ourselves the first of creatures—to imagine (for this is probably what the critic means) that we are so great and important in the universe that God has nothing else to do than to look after us. Suppose humanity to be nothing better in God's great universe than a sick child in a back street on its bed of pain, and its rank to be no higher in the vast population of

His worlds than a crossing-sweeper is with us, is it quite unthinkable that in the time of need this poor humanity should have a kindly visit from the Prince of the Universe? Will God be less God because He thinks of His poor sick child?

We have asked Nature, and it has answered, first, "Force"; and next, "Mind"; but in neither of them could we find the heart of a Father. Suppose now we look into history, and ask of Him who by common consent has the best right to speak. What does the Lord Jesus Christ say? He confirms, indeed, what Nature suggests as to the divine power and wisdom; but He assures us that there is more to tell. God is more than Force, He is more than Mind; God is Love. He is our Father in heaven, who loves us, and watches over us, and longs to bless us, and calls us His children, and tells us He wants to have us treat Him as a Father, and ask Him for all the things we need. And that great assurance of His finds an echo in the human heart, as has been proved by innumerable responses from every nation, and kindred, and tribe, and tongue. And what is there against it? Reason may not affirm it, but it certainly cannot deny it. "He that formed the ear, shall He not hear?" He that taught man love, shall He not love?

Herein we have the corrective of the sorrow of increasing knowledge. A simple youth leaves his country home and goes to the university. His

horizon is widened, his life is enriched, his thoughts on all manner of subjects are changed. His intellect is developed to the utmost; his affections not at all. He goes home and finds the rest of the family pretty much where he left them. He and they are worlds apart. Suppose now there were a college of love to which you could send him. He studies as hard in learning to love as he did formerly in acquiring knowledge. He comes back the second time. Is he double the distance away? Has the gulf widened? Nay, it is gone. He who was far off is brought nigh. In the same way what we learn of our Father's love from our Lord Jesus Christ is the corrective, the necessary corrective, of the false impression made upon those who are so narrow as to confine their view to the intellect. Is His power infinite? Then how far away! Is His wisdom infinite? Then how hopelessly out of reach! But is His love infinite? He is near; He is here. The chasm is bridged.

But it is not only that Christ teaches us about the Father; He is Himself the revelation of the Father. Recall the beautiful words which closely follow our first text: "Philip saith to Him, Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." God is afar off, is He? Read the record of His Son, watch Him as He moves among the people, see Him as He receives sinners—does He act as a stranger, one afar off? Is not every act, every word, every tone, that of a friend, a father, a brother? Is there

any one too obscure for Him to notice? And remember that He is "God manifest in the flesh." Remember, again, what He Himself said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Oh ye who have been living in the wintry air of the dry and frosty intellect, come into the summer of the love of Christ, and no longer will the intolerable vastness bow you down and the awful homeless spaces scare your soul. And ye who have been seeking satisfaction in the things of this present passing world, and become so immersed in them that you have lost the vision of God and the knowledge of the Father, come and sit at His feet and look into the Father's face. Listen as He calls, "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto Me . . . and I will give you rest." Come and make His acquaintance, dwell upon His love, meditate upon His words, look upon Him again and again, keep looking at Him, and as you do you will discover how much there was, how much there is in these words: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?" This is the answer—the only answer—the sufficient answer to the old question, "Show us the Father." It is not merely, Convince us that there is a Father, but *Show* us the Father—bring Him within our reach, and assure us of His readiness to hear. "*Show us the Father*, and it sufficeth us." The answer is the Incarnation, wherein we have the revelation of God which gives us the assurance that there is a Father to pray to.

II

I have dwelt at such length on the first difficulty that I must be brief in dealing with the two which remain. The first difficulty was, Is there a Father in heaven to pray to? The second is, Granted that there is, *dare I pray to Him?* Is He not an offended Father? The difficulty is acute when a man is guilty of some sin which he does not intend to give up. This is an insuperable obstacle: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." But even if a man makes up his mind to give up every sin, the difficulty is not entirely removed, for there is the chronic difficulty of the general condition of sinfulness, which has grown worse and more hopeless with each separate act of sin.

Now all this difficulty is met by the mediation of the Son of God. Not only has He by His holy incarnation revealed the Father, but by His atoning death He has bridged the gulf between us by our sin and estrangement. "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree." Not only has the Son of God bridged the chasm of Nature by becoming Son of man, but as Son of man, representative of our common humanity, He takes upon Him the awful burden of human guilt, gathers it about His holy life, feels the sting of it as none but a sinless soul could feel it. If any one suggests a difficulty about

this, let us think of Moses in the idolatrous camp of Israel, the one man entirely innocent being the one man of all the multitude who felt the guilt to be intolerable. So it was that the Son of God felt the guilt of our sins as none but His sinless soul could feel it. What a Nessus' shirt He wears that day, as He accepts sin's righteous condemnation, welcomes the sentence of God's righteous law upon it, dies, the Just for the unjust, takes away the sin of the world to bury it in His grave, and rises victorious over sin and death, having exchanged the lamentable cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" for the glad utterance, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." All this He does as Son of man, as representative of the human race, as representing you and me if we will have Him, as the forerunner of all who will follow Him, entering into the presence of God for us, and inviting us to enter the presence of God with Him by the way He has opened for us: "*through Him* we have access to the Father." The enmity is gone. We are "reconciled to God by the death of His Son." God can be just, and at the same time forgive freely all who cast in their lot with His Son and accept the atonement. Thus the second gulf is bridged. We could never have done it, but the Son of God has done it. As by His holy incarnation He crossed the chasm of nature between God and man, so by His atoning death and resurrection He has bridged the chasm of sin and death,

and opened up a way by which all who are His in heart and soul have free and open access to God. The answer to the first difficulty was, "I am the Truth," the Truth about the Father. The answer to the second difficulty is, "I am the Way," the Way to the Father.

III

But a third difficulty still remains, "*Can I pray?*" I may dare to do it, but what if I fail in the attempt? What if I find myself so taken up with other things that, whenever I try to pray, my mind wanders? The Father may be there to hear, the Son may be between me and Him to act as mediator, but my spiritual condition is such that I am not inclined to prayer—have no impulse to it, and no heart in it.

Just as the difficulty about God was met by the revelation of the Father, and the difficulty about the relations between God and man was met by the mediation of the Son, so also this difficulty of our inability to think and feel and pray as we ought is met by the coming and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. "Through Him we have access *by one Spirit* unto the Father." "*In* one Spirit" we read in the revised version, and the preposition is not unimportant. It marks the advance of Pentecost.

The work of the Spirit is needed at every stage. Except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot

enter, cannot even see the kingdom of God. It is the Spirit who teaches us to cry, "Abba, Father." "No man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost." We cannot pray at all but by the prompting of the Spirit:—

> "And every virtue we possess,
> And every victory won,
> And every thought of holiness
> Are His alone."

The Spirit thus is the principle of life from the beginning to the end, so that everything is by the Spirit. But there may be much done for us *by* the Spirit before we have any experience of life *in* the Spirit, and that is the special relation which belongs to this third stage; because the Spirit is not only the principle of life but also the element of life. Not only does He supply the power to breathe, but He is the very atmosphere from which we draw our breath. And now, since Pentecost, it is the privilege of the Christian to "live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit." We have His abiding presence around us and within us.

The life of the Christian varies from mere gasping on the one side to exuberant health on the other. Why the variation? Not because there is variation in the supply of air, but because there is such variety in the use of it. Spiritual breathing is not automatic, like natural breathing. It requires the act of faith growing into the habit of faith to

make it regular and full; and if only the lungs and the bronchial tubes are kept free and open, uninfested by the microbes of sin, and unclogged by the dust of the world, then prayer will be without ceasing, and the Spirit will make intercession continually in the shrine of our heart within, as the Son of God makes intercession continually for us in the temple above. Thus the last difficulty is fully met by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So we find the foundations of prayer laid in the doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God. Yet the Lord Jesus is the one Foundation. He is the Way to the Father: "through Him we have access." He shows us the Father: is the Truth. He comes and dwells in us by His Spirit as the Life of our life. "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."

> "Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
> More than all in Thee I find."

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us all.

VI

A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

VI

A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

"Ye are a royal priesthood."—1 Pet. ii. 9.

As we stand at the threshold of the second century of modern missions we see the whole world open to the Gospel of Christ. God has abundantly fulfilled the old promise, "I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron." But the very fact that all gates are open only deepens the impression of the magnitude of the work and of the impossibility of accomplishing it by efforts put forth on the present scale, immeasurably as it surpasses that of a hundred or even fifty years ago. The great fields are spread before us, not white unto the harvest yet, alas! far enough from that, except in some patches where faithful labour has been done for many years; but beyond these on every side the untilled fields spread out, rough and bare, calling for much labour in ploughing and many tears in sowing before the reapers can put the sickle in. We have, indeed, that other part of the promise, "I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight." But mark, it is before thee, not

instead of thee. The whole Church must awake, and rise and address herself to the work of bringing in the kingdom. Every member of the Church is called to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

There is, we acknowledge, no lack of apostolic zeal in the front rank. Is it too much to say that the last quarter of a century has been more prolific of missionary heroes than any other since the days of the apostles? And probably there has been a corresponding number at home showing similar devotion to the cause of Christ. Still it is only the few, only a very small minority; and that will never do. The work can never be done unless the same spirit be diffused throughout the Church. It may be too much to expect, indeed, that *all* should be inspired with this holy zeal. There always will be tares among the wheat until the harvest time, which is the end of the world. But is it too much to expect that before very long the indifferent may become the minority, an ever-diminishing minority, instead of, as at present, a vast preponderating majority? What is necessary is that there should be such a diffusion of zeal for the Lord that it can be fairly said, the Church is inspired by it. So long as it is only a minority, they can but speak for themselves. The Church as such is not in it. A few choice spirits in the Church are pressing forward, but the Church as a whole is really holding back. That must be changed. We must not allow ourselves to rest until

whole-hearted consecration is the rule and not the exception, and then the Church will speak and act and go forward, and be able to claim the promise in all its richness and fulness, and assurance of success, "I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight." Then shall "the glory of the Lord be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

I believe that the Church, as a whole, has got the length of realising that to be a missionary of the Cross is an honour; and it is understood that those who are called to this high position may well enter on it with ardour and enthusiasm. But what we need to realise is that "this honour have all the saints," and that the thought of it should inspire every one of us. Not the advance guard only, but the whole Church should be the army of the Lord. It is in the hope of giving some new impulse to this common devotion that I have chosen as our theme the suggestive and stirring words of the apostle, "Ye are a royal priesthood."

I

To whom were these words addressed? To a caste? To the clergy? To ministers of the Word? Certainly not. "To the strangers scattered abroad throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," *i.e.* to disciples of Christ of no note or standing in the Church. This is the priesthood

which the great apostle recognises. It is well worthy of attention that this same apostle, whose name and authority have been so unwarrantably pressed into the service of priestly assumption and papal usurpation, should be so careful to disclaim anything that would separate him from his brethren. In writing to elders, he calls himself an elder; in writing to these strangers, he says, "*ye* are a royal priesthood." Whatever then of dignity, privilege, power, or responsibility there may be in the royal priesthood belongs to the poorest, the feeblest, the obscurest member of the flock of Christ.

How has it come to pass then that in this enlightened century and in this Bible-loving England the utterly unscriptural belief in a priestly caste should have advanced by leaps and bounds? There is no utterance of Christ Himself, or His apostles, to give it a shadow of countenance. There are many passages which utterly condemn it. The spirit of the age has seemed to be against it; yet there it is all around us, the Established Church of the land still saturated with it. How is this?

May it not be because we who claim to be in all respects loyal to the New Testament keep the true priesthood too much in the background? A priesthood is a necessity to sinful man. If men do not see the genuine priest, they will flock to the false one. Now, have we not all been seriously at fault? Even the priesthood of Christ Himself has become obscured in much of our preaching. He is exalted

as the prophet of humanity, is proclaimed as Lord and Master, His life is set forth as our ideal and pattern; but His priesthood in many Christian pulpits is scarcely ever mentioned. Men in general are addressed as if they had nothing to do but of themselves to turn to the Lord, and try to serve Him to the best of their ability, in order to be as good Christians as they need to be. Hence the diminishing and, in many cases, disappearing sense of sin, the underestimating of the Atonement, the slight dependence on the intercession of Christ and the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. There is no breaking up of the fountains of the great deep, no plenteous rain from heaven on the dry ground. And if the priesthood of Christ is left in the background, it necessarily follows that the priesthood of believers is scarcely thought of, and very seldom appealed to as a source of inspiration. Let us by all means expose the pretensions of those who usurp the priestly office, but it is not by mere negation we shall gain the day. We must bring forward the true to take the place of the false; we must exalt our great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens, and show that through Him alone we have access to God, that by His sacrifice alone our sins can be forgiven, and through the merits of His intercession alone can we obtain the Holy Spirit, and with Him all good things. We must assert the rights of the whole people of Christ to the priestly prerogative and privilege, telling them with

the same emphasis as the great apostle himself, "Ye are a royal priesthood."

What, then, is this high dignity that belongs to the people of Christ? For clearness of thought it will be well to distinguish between the priestly office and the priestly privilege. Under the old covenant Aaron and his successors held the priestly office, while all Israel was a kingdom of priests according to the original charter. So in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ holds the priestly office, and all His people enjoy the priestly privilege. What this is may best be seen by recalling the functions of the priesthood. They were three—sacrifice, intercession, benediction. Our priesthood, like our Saviour's, begins with sacrifice, the yielding up of ourselves to be the Lord's. This gives us access through our great High Priest, by whom we have received the atonement; with that access comes the privilege of prevailing intercession; and out of these again arises the third prerogative, that of scattering abroad the blessings of the kingdom.

It is the last of these three that is specially in view in the word royal: "ye are a *royal* priesthood." If you examine the idea of royalty in the Old Testament, you will find the idea of benediction, the conferring of blessing, the great underlying thought in it. The kings of Israel were too often selfish and tyrannical, or weak and useless; but in so far as this was so, they were no kings at all in

the Bible sense. The ideal king was himself a man mighty for good, a fountain of blessing to his people. As an illustration of this, we may refer to Ps. lxxii. 6, 7: "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. In His days shall the righteous flourish, abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." Compare also the New Testament ideal of the kingdom as "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The ideal king was the man who would bring righteousness and peace and joy to his people.

Look at Israel again. They were a priesthood because they were called to special nearness to God, not as a matter of favouritism, not for their own sakes, but that they might be the means of conveying blessings, the blessings of righteousness, peace, and heavenly joy to other nations, and so prove themselves a royal priesthood. Though the nation as a whole utterly failed to realise their high calling, the ideal was never quite lost sight of. We have seen evidence of this in the seventy-second Psalm, and many other passages might be cited from the Psalmists and Prophets. Take the sixty-seventh Psalm, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us, that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations." The blessing they received was not given that it might remain with them, but that they might dispense it all around. These holy men of old not

only kept up the ideal of priesthood, but to a certain extent made it a reality. They proved themselves to be kings of grace and truth, just as Homer was a king of song, and Plato a king of thought. Have not these prophets and psalmists swayed the minds and hearts, and moulded the lives of men as the mightiest monarch never controlled the people under his rule? Take David as an illustration. What a spiritual power has come down the ages, and gone to the uttermost parts of the earth through the simple words of Psalm xxiii.! So with the prophets. Are they not kings to-day? Are they not ruling over millions of people as no other king rules? But alas! it was only a small minority who thus entered into the privilege of the royal priesthood. Accordingly the kingdom had to be taken from that nation and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

To whom is it given? Who are in the succession? Where are we now to look for the royal priesthood? The apostle tells us. All Christians, without distinction, are called to this high vocation, the privilege of receiving from God in order to bestow. This is the idea of the royal priesthood, priestly privilege on the one hand, royal bounty on the other. "I will bless thee" is the one side, "I will make thee a blessing," the other. This applies mainly to spiritual and heavenly blessings, but things temporal are not excluded, any more than they were in the covenant with Abraham. Privilege of every kind is included.

All that a man receives from God is a sacred trust to be used for the glory of God and the common good.

This is beginning to dawn on the minds of men as a truth of social science—no privilege without corresponding responsibility. But has not this been the doctrine of Christianity from the beginning? "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" and "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" You hold it in trust. You are not absolute owner to do what you will with what you call your own. You are bound to use it for the good of those who have not the same advantage. That has been all along the message of the Bible and of Christianity to men of wealth and influence. It has been far too little acted on, but the ideal has been there all the while, the high calling of every one who names the name of Christ. It is to this ideal of life that we must look for the solution of the problems with which society is now wrestling. There are those who seek it in the abolition of privilege; but this is vain. It is contrary to nature that privilege should cease. But who would object to privilege if its possessors realised their responsibility? Who would object even to large wealth if it were used for the general good? It is the hoarding of it, the amassing of it for mere selfish enjoyment, or for handing down immense fortunes to paralyse the energies, perhaps ruin the lives, of the unfortunate heirs-at-law—this it is which is as unchristian as it

is anti-social. No, it is not the abolition of privilege, but the realising of corresponding responsibility which is demanded. And this, rightly viewed, is really a doubling of the privilege, for "it is more blessed to give than to receive." "I will bless thee," was a great thing to say to Abraham; "Thou shalt be a blessing," was greater still.

This old Hebrew and Christian ideal of life is what we must keep urging on all members of the Church, and never rest until it is made actual. It has been remarked that the Hebrew ideal differed from the pagan in this that it lay, not in the past, but in the future. But no less remarkable was the difference between the thought of the one and of the other as to what constituted the golden age. The pagan ideal of life may be seen in their poets' pictures of the happy times under Kronos or Saturn when there was neither care nor trouble nor labour, but "life was a blameless holiday spent in gathering self-sown fruits, and death, unheralded by decay or old age, came to man as a sleep." A pleasing enough picture, but it is not *Life*. Is that your ideal of life? Surely it would never satisfy the least ambitious here. All that is noble and generous in you rises up and says, "It is not easy feeding that I want, leading up to an easy dying; I have that within which calls me upward to my being's height, upward to the Divine; I have that within me also which summons me to energetic activity outward, to influence others for good, to do my share in the

world's work, to take my place in the great Kingdom of God." *There* is the true ideal of life, all contained in the kindling thought, "Ye are a royal priesthood."

This high privilege, as we have seen, is within the reach of all. Only the few can be priests of science. Only the few can be kings of intellect. But all may be kings and priests in the region of the Spirit, for "there is no respect of persons with God." The most gifted is abundantly welcome, but the most simple-minded is not a whit behind him in the priestly privilege of access to God, and power with Him in prayer. Kings of intellect, men of light and leading, are of incalculable value; kings of commerce too, merchant princes; and they all may be also kings of righteousness and peace and joy, in which case there is a royal priesthood of the very highest type; but then the poorest and the weakest can share the honour with them. Do you remember the story told by Earl Cairns, of the chimney-sweep who had put twopence into the missionary box, quite a handsome sum for him? One of his companions saw him going along the street in his Sunday best, and asked him, "Hallo, where are you going?" "To the missionary meeting." "What are you going to a missionary meeting for?" "Well, you see I have become a partner in the concern, and I am going to see how the business is getting on." If we could but realise that we are all partners in the great business of receiving and dispensing "the

power of God unto salvation," we should need no exposition to tell us what a royal priesthood means.

II

Now that we have seen what is meant by the priesthood of believers, let us inquire what would be the practical consequence of making it a reality. We are all familiar with the idea as a weapon with which to fight the sacerdotalists. We tell them that the priesthood of the New Testament is not their priesthood, but that of all believers; but we do not show them the priests. That is the weakness of our position. Can we point to ourselves and to our congregations and say, Here is the true priesthood? The sacerdotalists have something to show: men in flesh and blood who are at least robed as priests, and who, perhaps, in their lives are better specimens of true priesthood than most of us. They have their sacrifice of the Mass, their incense (lost only for a time by the prohibition of the archbishops); they have their claim to pronounce absolution. Of what avail is it to put over against all that a mere doctrine, a mere claim which we phrase as "the priesthood of all believers"? Let the priesthood itself come forward, and the usurping priesthood will hide its diminished head. Let us first in our preaching give the same prominence to the cross of Christ which the sacerdotalist gives to the Mass. Let us put such stress on the great

fact that our High Priest ever liveth to make intercession for us, that the idea of a human intercessor will never even present itself to the mind. Let us make the presence of Christ by His Spirit so real, so vital, so constant in our experience, that the term, "real presence," as used by the sacerdotalists, will seem empty in comparison. Let us thus exalt the High Priest of our profession in all His priestly acts—in sacrifice, intercession, and benediction; and when men discover that the priestly office is not vacant, that it is filled by One who is a priest for ever in the power of an endless life, no mere minister will dare take this honour to himself, and no Church will dare to sanction the usurpation.

So much for the priestly office; now for the priestly privilege. Let Christian people not only claim it, but exercise it. That is the point. We all claim it; but how many exercise it? If we do, where will the caste of the priesthood be? It will be abolished. It is not levelling down that is needed; it is levelling up. We want not fewer, but more priests, priests who will prove themselves such not by the cut of their coat, nor by showing their names on a clergy list, but by the fact that they offer sacrifice daily, the sacrifice of all they are and of all they have to God; that they make intercession daily with prevailing power; and that daily their lives flow out in blessing, waves of spiritual influence passing out and out in ever-widening

circles till they reach the uttermost parts of the earth. After all, it is not less sacerdotalism that is wanted, but more, far more, only, of course, of the right kind, the New Testament kind, nothing in it of the audacity of usurpation or of the exclusiveness of caste, but more and more, and ever more of the great privileges and duties of the priesthood—sacrifice, intercession, benediction.

1. Sacrifice. If only Christian people could begin to realise how reasonable the service, how exalted the privilege of dedicating their all to Him who gave His all for them, who can tell what would be the result—not after long years, decades, centuries—but at once? As a matter of strict and immediate consequence, the Lord's treasury would be filled to overflowing. And that would be the very least result. It would mean that the kingdom of God would speedily come. Shall we not try to reach this ourselves, and then to bring our people to it? Oh, for a new era of devotion throughout the Church, a truly Sacerdotal offering to the Lord our God!

The old devotion has had too much of selfish isolation in it, the result of which has been the alienation of many truly philanthropic souls from the Church of Christ. They think even of devout Christians as people who make a great show of devotion to God whom they cannot see, while there is little—or nothing—of devotion to the welfare of their brethren whom they do see—and see often, alas! in a very sorry plight.

A distinguished historian of our time, in tracing the origin of the great secularist and materialist movement in Germany within the last thirty years, puts it in this way: "The devotion and enthusiasm which had been previously fixed on ideal and spiritual conceptions, were now concentrated on humanity." In this he touches on what has been a real weakness of the Church. Not that Christian people had made too much of what he calls "ideal and spiritual conceptions," but they had been too ready to rest in them, and far too slow to apply them as motive powers to bring about the regeneration of society. They had not made too much of the Fatherhood of God, but they had made too little of the brotherhood of man. But let the Church of to-day rise to her high calling as a royal priesthood, and the breach between Christianity and outside philanthropy will be healed. Many choice spirits who have been repelled will be attracted, and the way will be prepared for the universal acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus as Son of Man and Saviour of the World.

2. We need not only a new era of devotion, but a new era also of prayer. This is an age of activity, but surely not of prayer. There is a great deal of latent scepticism in the Church about prayer, especially that part of it with which we are now chiefly concerned—viz., intercessory prayer. Nowhere is the Church weaker than in her intercessions. There are multitudes of earnest Christians whose prayers for their own spiritual welfare are answered every day,

so that there is no question as to the efficacy of such personal petitions. But what about the intercessions? How many thousands every day—and tens of thousands every week—are praying, "Thy kingdom come!" And what does it all amount to? This is what occasions, and to some extent excuses, the scepticism of the time. The explanation is only too obvious. Intercession is worthless unless it be preceded by sacrifice. Let the Church first offer herself as a living sacrifice to God, and then see if her prayers for the coming of the kingdom be not speedily answered!

This weakness in intercession applies not only to nominal Christians, but to the great majority of those who pass for very good Christians—persons who have seen their need of a Saviour, and have found the Saviour they need in Christ, and, having accepted the Atonement, have had their sins forgiven, and are now in the way of salvation. To that extent they are devoted, but the idea of devoting themselves—all they are, and all they have—to the service of God for the advancement of His kingdom, has never taken hold on them. They are *not* a royal priesthood. They have no real enthusiasm for the kingdom; they may contribute their quota to missionary and philanthropic work, but their mind and heart and soul are not in it. It is not their life, only the smallest fraction of it—an unconsidered trifle, perhaps. And so their prayers are of the same sort—an unconsidered trifle.

If only the Church as a whole, or a fair majority of its members, were to so devote themselves to the cause of Christ that they would give it the same prominence and preponderance over the satisfaction of personal desires which it has in the Lord's Prayer —the model prayer, remember!—what an impulse, what an uplift, what an access of highest inspiration there would be for the Church! We should get far more for ourselves by it; for it is true in things spiritual as well as in things temporal, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." "The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends," and would not the Lord turn the captivity of His people if they began in downright earnest to use their high privilege of intercession? It would be like "streams in the South." "They that sow in tears would reap in joy."

3. Just as there would be a new era of devotion from our realising the need of sacrifice, the giving up of ourselves for the world's sake; and as there would be a new era of prayer from our availing ourselves of our high privilege of intercession, so there would come a new era of power. We can see how this would come about in a perfectly natural way. The Christian Church is now numerous enough to be able to exercise a mighty influence upon society, if only she were truly devoted to her high calling. As we have fully acknowledged already, there are

many truly devoted ones in her number; but they are a minority, therefore they are not the Church. The Church as a whole is still worldly, selfish, indifferent—is not a priesthood, still less a royal priesthood. It is with the modern Church as with Israel of old—she has never quite lost her ideal, for there always are men and women who are "an election within the election"; but, as a whole, up to this time she has never been truly devoted to the service of God and humanity, and therefore her influence, great as it has been, and much good as it has accomplished in spite of all defects and inconsistencies, has not amounted to a fraction of what it would at once become if it were the rule, instead of the exception, for Christians to be devoted to bringing in among men the Kingdom of God.

This devotion would have the same power that all devotion has when shared by a considerable number of people acting together, as, for example, when it enabled little Athens to drive back the might of gigantic Persia at Marathon and Salamis. Why, there is not one of the five great divisions of the Church in our country that is not more numerous than was the Republic of Athens! If only we had the same public spirit, the same enthusiasm for our Kingdom as they had for theirs! And if all could be united! Just think for a moment what the result would be if in England the millions of people in the Episcopal, Methodist, Congregational, Baptist, and Presbyterian Churches—if all these millions, or

even a considerable proportion of them—were filled with that compassion on the multitudes which was so constant a feature in the life of Him whom they all call Lord and Master and profess to follow as their Leader and Example: there would be love enough set free to heal all the sores of society in a generation. And that would not satisfy us. We should be filled with an intense desire to heal the sores of all society, to fulfil the old commission—given first to Abraham, renewed to Israel, and now handed on as a privilege to the Church of Christ—to establish over all the world the Kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost!

We have said, "if all were united." But, must we wait for the union? No! Let the tide of new devotion rise, and it will bring about the union; let each Church show itself a royal priesthood, and they will be all so much alike that differences would vanish; let all Christians be royal priests—and how could they keep apart? All the old discords would be lost in the full harmony of the new, old song: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and to His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

We have said that even on natural principles we can see that the new era of devotion and intercession would bring in a new era of power, but what shall we say when we take into account the Power from above? That Power—limitless, resistless—is there

now, waiting, waiting, oh so long! It is now more than eighteen centuries since the great King-Priest said, "All power is given to Me, in heaven and on earth"—power in heaven, the priestly power, to obtain blessing; power on earth, the kingly power, to dispense it. There it is—waiting, waiting. For what? For channels to convey it! There is the fountain of life, but where are the million streams to irrigate the dry and thirsty ground? There is the treasury of grace and truth and love waiting appropriation and distribution, calling for a royal priesthood to come and receive, and then to go and give, to pour the treasure out again to relieve the needy. Oh for a mighty quickening, a baptism of the Holy Spirit, impelling thousands, and hundreds of thousands, to yield themselves unto God for the sake of humanity, to plead with God as they have never done before, and then to go forth, endowed with power from on high, to win the whole world to the Christ of God!

VII

SPIRITUAL DYNAMICS; OR, HUMAN CHANNELS FOR DIVINE POWER

VII

SPIRITUAL DYNAMICS; OR, HUMAN CHANNELS FOR DIVINE POWER[1]

The Church of Christ now knows her calling reasonably well. She does not cease to regard the glory of God as her great aim; but she realises now that she is called to promote it, not so much by ascending into the empyrean, and vindicating against all gainsayers what is supposed to be the transcendental truth discovered there, but by going down into the world of men, which is her field, with the help and healing of His Gospel who loved to call Himself "the Son of man," "who went about doing good," and "healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." Salvation is our watchword, and always will be; but by this we mean not safety and happiness in the next world merely, but salvation here and now—salvation, not of the soul as distinguished from the body, nor of the body as distinguished from the soul, but the saving of men and women and children, body, soul,

[1] Moderator's Address before the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of England at its meeting in Regent Square Church, London, April 1891.

and spirit, first from sin, and also, and no less certainly, from misery—a double salvation, which in our day, as in the days of our Lord, must go on hand in hand. The time has gone by when any reputable body of Christians can be content with having their own souls saved, making their congregations self-sustaining, and promoting the prosperity of their own church. The Master's great command has rung out anew in the hearing of His disciples: "Go ye and preach the Gospel to every creature." The rallying cry is no longer "Salvation for me and mine," but "The world for Christ." It is "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come"; and by this is understood not only the carrying of the Gospel message over land and sea to the ends of the earth, but the bringing of Gospel blessings home to all ranks and conditions of men, the arresting of the ravages of drink and of preventible disease, the curbing of selfishness, the overthrow of all social as well as political tyranny, the abolishing of pauperism, the destruction of caste antipathies, the healing of the strife between labour and capital, the recognition everywhere of the Fatherhood of God, and the realisation of the universal brotherhood of man;—nothing less, in fact, than the presence and power of the Kingdom of Heaven all over the world: "Thy will be done *on earth* as it is in heaven."

A mighty undertaking, and one which does not grow easier as we come to closer quarters! Difficulties seem to multiply on every hand; and many

well-meant efforts not only fail, but sometimes do more harm than good. So many and great are the discouragements, that there are those who think the world is getting worse and worse, and that nothing short of another great miraculous intervention can meet the terrible exigencies of the time.

Yet it would seem that even under the present dispensation our resources ought to be sufficient. Did not our Lord say, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth," and make that grand assurance the basis of His great command? What more can be expected or desired? It is quite obvious that *He* did not consider the resources placed at the disposal of His people inadequate to the work He gave them to do. How comes it, then, that they seem to fail?

The supineness of the Church is a ready answer; and it has been only too sufficient in days gone by, when it could scarcely be said that any attempt was made to grapple with the evils which curse humanity. But though there is still far too much indifference throughout the Church, it cannot be denied that there has been a great awakening, and that efforts have been put forth, and are now being put forth, on a very considerable scale, without, as yet, the results which might reasonably be expected, considering the unlimited spiritual power at our disposal.

Is it, then, that too little has been made of the spiritual power? Have we paid too little heed to

that word which came of old to Zerubbabel, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord"? There may be some force in this too. We rely, perhaps, on the might of argument to cope with the forces of unbelief, and are disappointed to find that what seems to us unanswerable proof produces not the least effect on those to whom it is addressed. We rely on the power of money to relieve the woes of poverty, and are mortified to find, as we so often do, that it only aggravates the misery it was meant to cure. We look to the Legislature for the remedy of social evils, and find that, however much these may be reduced by the wise intervention of the State, they refuse to yield to any external methods of repression. We rely upon the forth-putting of great efforts, with new methods and appliances, and discover, after all, that somehow or other they do not accomplish more than a fraction of what has been eagerly expected. Is there too much reliance on the arm of flesh, and too little dependence on the power of the Spirit?

Yet surely there is no lack of recognition of Divine power as always necessary. It is the veriest commonplace of our sermons and addresses, and is never absent from our prayers. If, on the one hand, we are getting earnestly to work, and on the other are depending sincerely on the Divine power, what more is wanted?

May there not be wanting some link between the power and the work, some connecting medium to

render the power available? May it not resolve itself into a question of conveyance? Of what use is the most inexhaustible mine if the means are wanting of bringing its wealth into the markets of the world? Of what avail is the power of Niagara, or the immeasurable energy of the tides of ocean, if the vast store of force cannot be distributed to the points where it is needed for the world's work? Who can measure the force of the wind? Yet how little can man make of it! Unless there be a sail spread to catch it, it may blow as it list and man's work remain undone. Why is it that on a hot summer day if you ascend high enough you are stricken with cold? You are getting nearer the source of light and heat, but both light and heat are failing you; and if you could ascend still farther, beyond the outer verge of the earth's atmosphere, both would fail you altogether; though the sun would still be burning overhead, nearer than ever, all round you would be dark and cold. There is no diminution of power in the source of light and heat; it is the medium for conveying them that is wanting. To enlighten and warm the earth, not only is it necessary that there should be the glorious sun in all the plenitude of its unfailing resources, but wrapped close around the earth there must be an atmosphere that can receive, and transmit, and diffuse the light and warmth which come from the sun.

Thus the conveyance of power is as important in

its way as the power itself. And while the power is of God, its conveyance is for man. This is apt to be forgotten. Many expect the Spirit's power to come in some direct miraculous manner, like rain from a cloudless sky. They do not realise that though the power is supernatural, just as the sun is far above the earth, yet it must be brought to bear in strictest accord with the laws of our spiritual environment, just as the light and heat of the sun must be diffused on the earth in accordance with terrestrial conditions. The atmosphere is quite subordinate to the sun in the matter of light and heat, yet it is essential and indispensable; and in the same way though man is nothing and God is everything in relation to spiritual power, yet the human side of the Spirit's agency is as necessary, as indispensable in its way as the Divine. It is this human side of the Divine agency which we are convinced needs far more attention than has yet been given it.

It is one of the hopeful signs of our times that what we may call the earthly side of heavenly truth, or the human side of Divine truth, has been brought into new prominence. The age in which we live is impatient of the transcendental and clamorous for the practical, content with nothing that does not bear on the every-day life of man. We have already observed how philanthropy has come into the foreground of the Church's aim and endeavour; and so long as we never allow ourselves to forget the

great truth conveyed in the Apostle's majestically simple declaration, "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things," the result cannot but be good; for we have the very highest authority for the mutual convertibility of the service of God and the service of man: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me"; as also for making the service of man the expression and test of devotion to God: "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

The same useful and practical tendency is seen in the concentration of attention on the human life of Christ. Time was when the humanity of Christ, though holding a place in the Church's creed, had completely disappeared from its living faith, as, *e.g.* when it was possible for a devout soul like Dante, seeking for examples of the virtues and graces to inspire the eager spirits ascending, terrace by terrace, his Mount of Purgatory, to pass by the life of Christ, where he could have had the richest variety, and confine himself to that of the Virgin Mary, though he had to exercise the greatest ingenuity in extorting the illustrations he required from the exceedingly scanty, and not very promising, notices of her the sacred writers afford. To him, one of the devoutest of souls and most orthodox of thinkers, Christ was God only; His life on earth was nothing better to him than a Divine mystery, every part of it quite out of his reach. This is indeed an extreme

case; but there has been the same tendency in much of the old theology since the Reformation as well as before it. And much of the rationalism of later times has been a reaction from that extreme, which has not been without some wholesome effect on those who remained loyal to the ancient faith. The result has been that in our day much attention has been given to the human side of that Divine life, with the patient endeavour to enter into it, to appreciate even its limitations, to realise it as a veritable human life, with the hopes and fears, the temptations and difficulties, the encouragements and discouragements, which are the common experience of man. And to those who never forget that He is "God manifest in the flesh," all this is unspeakable gain.

In the same way much attention has been called in recent times to the human side of the Divine Word in the Scriptures. To very many, perhaps to the great majority of good Christian people of the last generation, the personality of Moses and David and Isaiah, and Luke and Paul and John, was as completely lost as was the humanity of Jesus to the poet Dante. A text from one book was exactly the same to them as a text from another. They did not forget that it was the Holy Ghost speaking, but they did forget that "holy *men* of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." For all the use the men's names were to them, they might have been all blotted out, and the word

"God" put in instead. It was even thought to be a merit to ignore the human altogether, as if the one fault of the Bible was its unfortunate habit of telling us what this man and that man said, when it would have been so much simpler and more satisfactory if it had just cut the matter short by putting the whole from beginning to end in the name of God. But happily there have been those who have shown more reverence for the Scriptures as they are, who have thought that it was not in vain that our attention was called to the holy men of old who spoke to their fellows the Word of God; and, therefore, that it is well worth while to study these men, to make ourselves acquainted with the circumstances which formed the occasions of their utterances, to try to enter into their thoughts and feelings, and so to bring out that human side of the Divine Word which links it to our human lives. Just as in the life of Christ realised as the life of a *man* upon the earth, we have God brought near to us, brought down into the atmosphere of our thought, so that we see His face, and feel His touch, and hear the beating of His heart; so in the writings of these holy men of old, prophets and apostles, the Word of God comes to us—not as a succession of unearthly voices out of a far-away heaven, but as warm words of life from the hearts of "men of like passions with ourselves." We get them with the warmth and the glow of earth's atmosphere around them. In all this, not only have we the Bible made more human,

while none the less Divine, but we get rid of a host of difficulties which needlessly troubled our fathers, and which, unhappily, still more needlessly trouble some of their children, who have no ear to hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches in these days—we get rid of them, for we now see that they are difficulties which are inseparable from the human medium, and do not at all affect the Divine source from which the Word of Truth has come.

It is the glory of our faith that it is never transcendental. The Divine side of truth is, indeed, so high that we can never attain unto it; but there is always a human side, by which the Divine is brought near to us, in closest touch with daily life and common duty. It was necessary that God should use the prophets in speaking to the fathers; it was necessary that the Word should be "made flesh and dwell among us"; and it is no less necessary that the risen Saviour, the Christ of to-day, should find hearts ready to receive His spirit, and lives prepared to be the instruments of His power, before His way can be known upon earth, and His saving health among all nations. We must hold with unabated loyalty our confidence in the Spirit's power, and in the boundless resources of our risen Lord, in whose name He acts; but the want of the time is to realise the absolute necessity of the human agency, not merely to do philanthropic work, but to transmit spiritual power.

Many of the most active Christians, of those who are zealous for every good work, are still far too transcendental and too little practical in their thoughts about the Spirit's agency and power. As a proof of this, take the average notion of prayer for the Spirit. What it is may be inferred from the almost universal practice of pleading with God for the outpouring of His Spirit; as if Pentecost had not yet come, as if the Old Testament promise of the outpouring of the Spirit had not been fulfilled long ago, and once for all, when the Spirit was given to abide with the Church for ever. The result is that thousands of prayers are lost by misdirection. People are led to look wistfully up to heaven, whereas they ought to be engaging their attention with something nearer home. It is not *out-pouring* that is wanted; it is *in-letting*. The prayer for the Spirit which is needed is not the beseeching of heaven to open its shut windows. The windows of heaven are not shut. They are wide open. In too many cases it is our hearts that are shut. Ah, these gates that shut the Spirit out, gates of brass, doors whose hinges are so stiff with selfish habit that they seem for ever closed! "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in."

This is not a mere matter of a phrase. It is true that a Christian may pray for the outpouring of the Spirit when what he really means is that he and others may be persuaded to make room for the

Holy Spirit. But there are many who do not realise at all that the block on the line may be at their own door. They think they must wrestle with God, when all the time God is wrestling with them. It is free course for the Spirit's movement from heart to heart that is wanted. There is no obstacle in the line of the perpendicular. It is on the horizontal lines that the block occurs. Human hearts and lives are the conductors of the Spirit, who is close around us all like the circumambient air pressing for admission: and the main thing wanted is that these hearts open to Him and make room for Him; and then, themselves charged, allow the gracious current to pass on through them to others.

Many seem to think that prayer for the Spirit is like an order on the Divine Power, payable in some other place; that one may gather a prayer-meeting in a West-End drawing-room, for instance, and ensure the forth-putting of the Spirit's power in the East End, without the trouble of going there, even to see that the draft is honoured. We may not indeed say that such prayers are useless, if they be sincere; for how, then, should we pray in England for work in China? But, indeed, in the one case, as in the other, the value of the prayer will depend on the petitioners doing what they can to provide a channel for the answer to their prayers, a human channel, too, if not by going themselves, by linking themselves in genuine heart-sympathy with those who do. Suppose, now, the whole Church gathered

together in one vast prayer concert, to unite in the petition, "Thy kingdom come," and suppose all to be thoroughly in earnest, in what form should we expect the answer to come? Should we expect a sudden outpouring of the Spirit on the unbelieving world? It was not so when the hundred and twenty were "all with one accord in one place." The answer to their prayers was not the outpouring of the Spirit on the world, but on themselves; after which they went out in the power of the Spirit, not apostles and missionaries alone, but all of them, the women as well as the men, the servants as well as the masters, to make the Kingdom known. They did not go and do the work themselves and then expect that the Lord would "*add*" His blessing; they went in the name of the Lord, in the power of the Lord, His Spirit living in them and working through them.

The very first thing they had to do was to let Him in, to do His work to the fullest extent in themselves. And that must be the first step still. We may not indeed limit the Spirit of God who worketh when and how He willeth; and it is most comforting to hear from time to time of cases which make it evident that He can and does save men without a preacher, without a living witness, without even a leaf of the Bible or a page of a tract; but it is not in that way that we are taught to look for the answer to our prayers. It is not miraculous interpositions we are led to expect; it is not the forthputting of omnipotent force, but the supply of

sufficient grace, which would be omnipotent too, if only there were channels to convey it in sufficient volume, if only it were allowed free course through the Church to the world.

We are very much exercised—and rightly—about the condition of the degraded poor, and we are well aware that they need not only better environment, but new life; not only cleaner houses, but cleaner hearts; and, therefore, that, in addition to the natural resources of philanthropy, there must be the supernatural resources of Christianity. But how are these resources to be brought to bear? As for the philanthropic work, let it by all means go on, and let Christian people show that they are not a whit behind the chiefest of those who are only philanthropists; but, if we are to bring to bear the Divine resources at our disposal, it is not enough to throw in a few thousand sermons, and distribute some millions of tracts, and delegate evangelistic work to a few hundreds of missionaries. Let us by no means slacken in these endeavours, for thus at all events some are rescued from the gulf; but if thorough work is to be done, we must begin higher up and nearer home.

In the first place, we must not forget that it is of little avail to drain the bog from below, unless the streams of sin which flow continually into it are cut off from above. We must not forget that there are moral slums in regions where there is no such excuse

as must be made in Whitechapel: there are candidates for the abyss in the avenues and squares; there are those who are now contracting the accursed habit of drink, and those who are beginning the still more accursed and shameful ways of licentiousness, who bid fair, in ten or twenty years' time, to be in as pitiable a condition as the vilest wretches in Darkest England are to-day. The Church has quite as important a work to do with respectable as with disreputable sinners; as much responsibility for the character of the upper ten as for the condition of the submerged tenth.

Those higher up have less need of philanthropic exertions; but they have just as much need of saving grace. This carries us a step higher—from the respectable sinner to the respectable Christian. Where is he, and what is he doing? For the most part making money, and looking out for himself and his family. He recognises the need of missionary work, and he pays for it, and prays for it. By paying he furnishes the means; and by praying he thinks he throws on God the responsibility of furnishing the power. He withholds the one thing needful—the channel to convey the power. He is not living a spiritual life. He is not exerting a spiritual influence. He is not only failing to contribute his share of spiritual force, but is positively blocking the path by which it must pass. He is joining, every Sunday perhaps, in prayers for the outpouring of the Spirit; and he would be glad that

the Spirit should be outpoured on the East End of London; but he takes good care that no more than is convenient is poured into his own heart and life.

The crying need of the time is not money, not prayer, not preaching, not evangelistic effort; it is men, men and women, saturated with the Spirit of Christ; not a few, or even a great many, to go out as missionaries and evangelists, but men and women by the tens of thousands, by the million, *to be Christians*, to open heart and life to the Spirit's grace; enough of them to create an atmosphere absorbing, and retaining, and diffusing the light and heat now streaming from the Sun of Righteousness, to carry in every direction by innumerable channels of irrigation the Water of Life, to take up and distribute the vast unused Niagara force, the mighty tidal energy which would accomplish all the Church's work before this generation passed away.

Where are we now? From the physical slums we ascended to the moral slums which supplied them, and from the respectable sinner to the respectable Christian. Have we reached the starting-point yet, the point where the great reformation must begin? Who is responsible for the average Christian? The average minister and elder, let us say, to put it in the terms of our Presbyterian polity. Is it not so? The responsibility indeed is mutual. It is common to misquote the prophet Hosea as if he had said "like priest, like people." What he did say was

"like people, like priest," which is a less obvious truth, and for that very reason more in need of saying. Yet no one will question that where a general reformation is needed it should begin with the leaders. And who is there that will doubt that if all the ministers of this Synod—let us narrow the scope for the moment to make it practical—were to give themselves up wholly to the Spirit of Christ, to be purged from all our dross, emancipated from selfishness and self-seeking, delivered from self-consciousness both on the silly side of conceit and on the weak side of timidity and distrust, to be possessed with the passion for souls, so that, indolence having become an impossibility, we should all be constrained to use every atom of our energy in the service of our Master, to pour out our hearts in pleading with our people to be filled with the Spirit; if all the ministers of this Synod were so to consecrate themselves—body, soul, and spirit—to be ministers of the Spirit to those over whom we are set in spiritual things, who can doubt that before another Synod there would be the beginning of a rising tide of spiritual life all through our congregations, which would not only be full of promise for ourselves and the future of our work, but which would tell by degrees on the spiritual life and work of England, with out-reaching influences that would in course of time be world-wide? We should in this way do far more to hasten the abolition of the slums than if we were in the

course of a year to double our contributions—ay, or to increase them tenfold—for work among the degraded poor.

The great hindrance to the starting of the work at the right end is the average Christian's and the average clergyman's contentment with things as they are. It is our satisfaction with quiet and respectable routine; our disposition to take things easy; our dread of innovation. We all recognise the humour in the answer of the late W. B. Robertson to the old lady who was alarmed when she saw the Decalogue on the wall of the new church: "You think it a serious innovation to print the commandments there?" "Yes, I do." "But we are going in for an innovation much more serious." "What is that?" she asked, in horror. "We are going to do our best to keep them." We smile at the humour of the answer, but we cannot take too seriously the sad fact which gives it all its piquancy. Is it not the case that the keeping of the commandments of Christ sometimes seems to be the last thing Christian people think of? What is the first commandment of the Law? Thou shalt love. What is the second? Thou shalt love. What is the sum of the ten? Love. What is the new commandment which our Lord especially calls His own? "Love one another, as I have loved you." What is the fruit of the Spirit? The fruit of the Spirit is, first of all, "Love." Now is there a Church in

Christendom in which it would not be an innovation to give to love that central position of supreme importance? How many excellent Christian people are there who, notwithstanding the distinct testimony of the Spirit of God that though a man may know all mysteries and all knowledge and have not love, he is nothing, habitually reverse it, put the understanding of all mysteries far above love, and even make the supposed necessity for it the excuse for exchanging the love of God's Spirit for the gall of the devil's bitterness.

One of the first and surest results of giving the Spirit of Christ free scope in the Church would be the coronation of love and the stigmatising of uncharitableness as the worst of all heresies, the heresy of all others which most effectually bars the path of the Spirit on His way to the healing of the world's awful sores. If the power on which we relied were intellectual, then the understanding of all mysteries and all knowledge, correct opinions on difficult and debatable points of theology, would be of prime importance; but the power on which we rely is *spiritual*, and therefore almost everything depends on the spirit in which we live and act and speak. Faith comes first, of course, in the order of time, but not faith in all mysteries and all knowledge, but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, a faith which always works by love, so much so that the absence of love not only unfits for transmitting the Spirit's power, but is the very negation of disciple-

ship: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

But "God is light" as well as love; and the Spirit must not only grant us His grace, but guide us into His truth. Here again the one thing needful is to let the Spirit in, without fear of any innovations He may make. Not that there can be any innovation on "the truth as it is in Jesus," who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"; or on the truth as taught by the Spirit through apostles and prophets. But the truth of God is one thing, and man's mode of viewing and presenting it is another; and while we are unflinchingly loyal to all that God has clearly revealed, it becomes us to hold with a very loose grasp the "doctrines and commandments of men." We have indeed to be on our guard against that notion of loyalty to truth which really means blind acceptance of what men in past ages have said. We must be most careful not to stamp with Divine authority that which is only a phase, perhaps a passing phase, of human thought, the effect of which will be that when it passes it will be assumed that the Word of God is passing too. It is apt to be forgotten that loyalty to the Spirit not only demands that we do not surrender any truth committed to our keeping; but equally that we do not insist on more than He insists on. There is a plague on those who add as well as on those who take away, and the warning against overloading comes first, as if it were the

more dangerous and the more insidious of the two; "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book."

The Spirit was present no doubt with the revered Fathers of the Church, to whom we are indebted for the systematising of the truth revealed in Holy Scripture. But the presence of the Spirit did not guarantee them, any more than it guarantees us, against error. The very holiest and best are liable to error, and it therefore becomes all Christians to keep their minds open to any new light the Spirit of God may have for them. We must be loyal to Christ as a present Lord, walking now in the midst of the golden candlesticks. We cannot do without the old foundations. Thanks be to God that they have been laid deep and strong and sure, never to be moved. But the householder has to do with things new as well as old. The Tree of Life is the same as ever in its old roots and its strong stem; but year by year it must bring forth fruit, and we must not blame those who prefer that which is fresh and full of recent sap to the dried or canned produce of fifty or five hundred years ago. The Church of the Rock must be also the Church of the Vine; and it needs the daily tending and guiding of the heavenly Husbandman. So we need guidance still. We need the guidance of the Spirit day by day, year after year; the Church needs it generation after generation, for each generation has its own

difficulties and problems; and that Apocalyptic word of the first century is by no means obsolete in the nineteenth, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit *saith* unto the Churches."

We open all our church courts with prayer for the Spirit's guidance. Of what value is such an appeal from those who never dream of such a thing as the possibility of their changing their minds? When the attendance at the opening devotions is scant, it is felt by all of us to be a reproach; but surely those who absent themselves altogether cannot grieve the Spirit more than those who make the request for guidance a mere form of words. The man who is quite certain he is right in matters on which true Christians seriously differ, who never for a moment entertains the possibility of his being mistaken, grieves the Spirit in both departments of His work—first in that of grace, for he shows himself destitute of humility, and then in that of truth, for he virtually declines the Spirit's guidance. He may, indeed, think he is only shutting his mind to human influence, as who should say, "I am open to conviction, but I should like to see the man that would convince me," and still leaving it open to Divine interference. But what reason has he to expect that God will work a miracle for his enlightenment, if he closes his mind against the ordinary channels of spiritual guidance, the intercommunion in a frank, humble, teachable spirit with those in whom the Spirit of God dwells? If Christians only

met each other in that spirit, though differences of opinion would not cease, these would no longer interfere with the unity of the spirit or weaken the bond of peace, we should be "of one heart and one soul," and though never quite of one mind, should attain sufficient harmony in the realisation of the noble motto: "In things essential, unity; in things indifferent, liberty; in all things charity."

So far we have been speaking of letting the Spirit in; it would now be in order to speak of lending Him utterance. But the time is now so far spent that we cannot attempt to treat this part of our subject, but must dismiss it in a very few words, most important though it is. If in-letting is the first thing, out-letting is the next. If the greater number of professing Christians block the path of the Spirit by refusing to let Him in, the greater number of real Christians arrest His progress by refusing to utter the life that is in them. Oh, there are utterances enough—too many—from our pulpits and through the press, in the approved and conventional channels; but where is that spontaneous frank interchange of thought and feeling which in the early Church went by the name of "Fellowship," and was such a power for the propagation of the Gospel? There is no prayer more needed in our time than that old one, "O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise." And that not only in the service of praise, though

that is of far greater importance than many of us imagine. For a vast number of the members of our churches it is the one opportunity they have of utterance, and one would think that the effect of the repression at other times would be such a burst of praise, such an outpouring of soul, that it would be impossible for the most "stout-hearted" stranger to enter such an assembly without feeling the tides of spiritual power, and realising for the time that he was at the gate of heaven. There is an untold amount of unused spiritual power in the service of praise.

But utterance is wanted not so much in the Church as in the world, in the ordinary course of daily life; for there are thousands of people who are quite ready to sing,

> "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
> In a believer's ear!"

and yet take very good care that they never sound it either in a believer's or an unbeliever's ear. Oh, this pitiful isolation—how effectually it prevents all accumulation of the heavenly electricity; how hopelessly it bars the path of the Spirit on His way to the winning of the heart of the world!

We do not forget that there are other ways of uttering the life that is in us than by the lips. We do not forget that actions speak louder than words —which of us is there who is not stirred by the spiritual eloquence of those timely gifts in the North, which have led to the enfranchisement from

debt of a whole Presbytery, and those stimulating benefactions in the South which have made so many of our London congregations to rejoice and be exceeding glad? We do not forget that our Lord was no less God manifest in the flesh during the many quiet years spent in the workshop at Nazareth than in the brief crowded period of His ministry. But all this must go without saying, for the standing order for eight o'clock must have some show of respect.

The sum of the whole is, that for the winning of the world to Christ we are not to wait for some new miraculous interposition, inasmuch as the resources of Divine grace are fully adequate, if only the human agency were furnished in sufficient force; that the demonstration of the Spirit which is needed must find its sphere in human hearts and lives open first to give Him entrance, and then to give Him utterance; to allow Him first to impress Himself upon them, and then to express Himself by them; as of old the Word must be made flesh, the mystery of the Incarnation must be repeated in the Church of Christ, which is His body.

Then would all our difficulties disappear, and the world be speedily won for Christ. The controversy about miracles would be brought to an end by the standing miracle of grace. The deity of Christ would be finally proved beyond all denial by the manifest presence of His Spirit through the entire Church from one end of the world to the other.

The question, "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" would acquire a new and mighty significance. And how speedily would our social problems be resolved in the new atmosphere charged with the light and heat of the Sun of Righteousness and Love! How soon would it be acknowledged on all hands that there is no real conflict between capital and labour, that the one cannot suffer without the other suffering with it, and, with confidence restored and selfishness expelled, the one could not increase without the other increasing and rejoicing with it! And so would it be with all our social evils. The more one thinks of it, the more one realises that to the beneficent power of self-sacrificing love, widely diffused and evermore widely diffusing itself throughout society, there are no assignable limits. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." If only the hearts of Christians were thrown open to receive and transmit the love of the Spirit, the great spiritual temple of the kingdom of God on the earth, which it is the work of the Church to rear, would be completed in a generation, and those hands are now at work which would bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask or think, *according to the power that worketh in us*, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

VIII

CHRISTIANITY AND COMMERCE

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Are Christianity and commerce friends or foes? Are they mutually helpful or mutually destructive? Or has each a separate sphere with which the other has nothing to do?

That Christianity claims commerce goes without saying; and in a country like ours, where commerce is so very large a part of our life, if Christianity fails to control it, it fails entirely; if it loses commerce, it loses Britain.

But how is it on the other side? Will commerce accept her laws from Christ? Is it to her interest to do so? Or is she better to be independent, to have her own laws and code of honour, and trust to her own resources for her well-being and permanence? Now it is our firm conviction, that just as certainly as Christianity needs to possess and control commerce, so urgently does commerce need to possess and be controlled by Christianity.

Commerce is the framework of society. And in

[1] Address delivered at Federal Council of Presbyterian Churches held in Dundee on 14th November 1895.

our day the whole world has become one vast community; a whole complex organisation like the human body, with innumerable lines of communication along which there is maintained a ceaseless circulation of that which ministers to the common life. Of this common life commerce is the material bond. But there must be a spiritual bond as well. As the body without the spirit dies and dissolves, so commerce without the indwelling spirit of Christianity would fall into corruption and decay.

It is not enough that commerce should be guided by intelligence. If it were, then a true science of political economy would be the one thing needful. It must be ruled by conscience and inspired by the dictates of the heart. It must be in subjection first to the law of righteousness and next to the law of love.

I

That commerce has a righteousness of its own we admit, otherwise it could not have existed. Like Christianity itself it is founded on faith. When confidence is shaken, business is shaken; when confidence revives, business revives; if faith were to perish, business would collapse. But confidence could not survive without some justification. If all men were liars, there could be no such thing as faith; if there were no righteousness in commerce, business would cease. Seeing, then, that righteousness is a necessity of business, may we not trust to the code

of honour it will establish for itself? Is not honesty the best policy? May we not trust, then, to the ordinary righteousness of the market without seeking the higher sanction of religion?

Now that honesty is the best policy for a community every one will acknowledge; not only the best policy, but the only policy. We have spoken of commerce as the bond of society; but this assumes fair dealing throughout. Every dishonest act loosens the bond. Every deed of unrighteousness is a blow aimed at the life of commerce. So we might trust a community to make some attempt by laws and by the pressure of public opinion to enforce righteousness.

But the transaction of business is an individual matter; and is it quite clear to all and sundry that honesty is the best policy for the individual? Most clear it is to those who look at all the issues in the light of Christian principle—to those who accept Christ's estimate of the transcendent value of righteousness—to those who realise that it would be better to be beggared for life and maintain their integrity, than to gain the whole world and lose it. But in the ordinary commercial sense it frequently happens that honesty is not the best policy for the individual. Will any one say that, as a rule, those are the most conscientious men who make money fastest and most easily? Is there no such thing as making rich by imposition, by concealment, by double-dealing? Are there no questionable prac-

tices in trade which have even a certain measure of public opinion in their favour, so that those who wish to find an excuse for falling in with the evil custom can say, "They all do it, so we must do it too."

How comes it that such things can be in a country whose commerce is supposed to be based on righteousness? Simply because so many of those engaged in commerce have not the Christian ideal before them; they do not in their business life "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," content that commercial success should be added thereto. They of course believe that if money can be made by fair means, these are altogether preferable; but if it cannot be made in that way, then it must be made in some other way. If a salesman can dispose of his goods by telling the simple truth, so much the better; but if not, why then he must not be too squeamish about stretching it a little.

How then is this ever-recurring temptation to make money at the expense of conscience to be met? Not certainly by showing ever so clearly and conclusively that strict integrity is on the whole and in the long run good for commerce. If righteousness is to be chosen for the sake of commerce, it will always suffer when put alongside what seems a commercial advantage. There must be a righteousness which commands allegiance, apart altogether from consequences. The passion for righteousness must completely dominate the passion for gold; which is

just another way of saying that the world of commerce must acknowledge subjection to the first and great commandment of the law, that which calls for supreme devotion to God, or as Christ put it in the Sermon on the Mount, "seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

Perhaps some may think that by giving business, as such, the second place in all men's minds and the first in none, it might suffer for want of that strenuousness which now impels so many able men to put forth all their strength. But, in the first place, should we not be better with a little less of this same eagerness? Does any sane thinker suppose that commerce would really suffer if those who are now filled with the passion for making money as fast as possible were to become more moderate in their ambition? Would it not rather tend to cure the greater part of those evils of competition which are so much lamented in our times? Besides, it must be remembered that while the motive which is most influential now would be somewhat lessened in force, other motives quite as serviceable and far more honourable would take their place. Suppose that the weakening of the desire to benefit one's self were coupled with the strengthening of the desire to do justice to one's customers, would society suffer? Suppose men in general realised that God had called them to serve Him in the way of business, that He had assigned them their place and work, and expected every man each day to do his duty at what-

ever cost, would there not be scope enough for a far better and more honourable ambition than that which now holds the field?

Only let this passion for righteousness and service prevail, and commerce would not only be saved, but lifted up to that place of honour which properly belongs to it. It is a remarkable fact that the Hebrew prophets, living in the time when Israel was still a pastoral people, and therefore naturally out of sympathy with commercial pursuits, should nevertheless show such generous appreciation of the commercial greatness of their wealthy and powerful rival immediately to the north of them. They had it as their burden, and a burden they felt it to be, to pronounce the doom of Tyre; but they could not do it without setting forth in noblest prophetic strains the great truth that commerce is of God—that there is an ideal commerce which is not only a good thing, but perfect, thoroughly according to the mind of God, and that the actual business of a great city would be the perfect thing which God intended if it were not marred by men's iniquity.

We do not indeed suppose that British commerce is hastening to its fall, as was that of Tyre in the days of Isaiah and Ezekiel; but it is certainly far below the ideal which was in the prophet's mind when he said, "Thou wast in Eden the garden of God"; and again, "I set thee, so that thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; . . . thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast

created, till unrighteousness was found in thee." Why should the phrase, "a nation of shopkeepers," be a term of contempt? Why should the word "tradesman" be other than a title of respect? Because commerce has not only fallen from its true ideal, but has almost lost sight of it. Look at that word "mercenary," and its relationship to the word "merchant." It is universally looked on as a reproach to a professional man to be mercenary. A physician in his practice has an eye to his fee, of course; but it is not the main thing. It is assumed to be subordinate, and with all the best physicians is subordinate. The ideal of a physician is that of service to humanity. Hence, for example, the fine scorn that is felt for the keeping of prescriptions secret. And the same thing is true, more or less, of all the professions. There may be a mercenary spirit in any of them; there is too much of it, no doubt, in all of them; but it is never approved. Why should it be otherwise in commerce?

When we say that commerce has lost its ideal, we do not mean that all commercial men are mercenary in their spirit. Far from it. There are very many true Christians in all the walks of commercial life, who not only know, but ever keep before them the high ideal of service both to God and man; but as things are, it is almost impossible to avow it.

It is quite the rule for professional men to claim that their main object is the good they can do, not the money they can make; and it does not require

any special courage to make the claim, because it is assumed even by men of the world that it is so; it is, therefore, not felt to be any claim to superior goodness. But let a business man make it, and there would be a general feeling that he was setting himself up as a very superior person indeed. It is not expected of a business man that he should be other than mercenary in his spirit. Is not that so? And is it not deplorable that it should be so?

So commerce needs Christianity not only to save it from destruction, but to raise it to honour, to give it its true place in the garden of God, every precious stone its covering, as Ezekiel puts it; which being interpreted might mean decoration of the Legion of Honour, its station high up on the holy mountain.

II

So much for the claims of righteousness; we must now say something of the claims of love. Loyalty to righteousness belongs to the first table of the law, supreme devotion to God. Christ's law of love covers the ground of the second table. Thus the two divisions of our subject cover the whole ground of Christian ethics as applied to commerce.

There are many who, though fully acknowledging the claims of righteousness, decline to allow that love has any place in business. The old masters of political economy who presided at the opening of the

great industrial era which nearly coincides with the century in which we live, had the idea that society was so constructed that its welfare would be best secured by every man working for his own hand. There were many causes which gave currency to this view. First, the men who taught it were masters, and then they did such good work in exploding older heresies, the heresies of the so-called "mercantile system" for example, which confounded gold and silver with wealth, and promoted governmental interference in the way of monopolies and bounties and many other unwise restrictions and unhealthy encouragements. Against this, these men came in with the demand: "Only let things alone—none of your interference—only let trade and commerce be free, and all will be well." And all would have been well if it had been only the law of the state from which commerce set itself free, but when it made just as little of the law of God, the royal law according to the Scripture, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," it prepared for itself a heritage of evil of which no one had any thought or fear in the early days. The extraordinary advance in prosperity and wealth which followed the new departure so filled the minds of men that pæans were sung for the marvellous century in which we wonderful people lived, till we began to be a little ashamed of ourselves "in this same confident boasting," and for a long time few people noted or suspected "the little pitted speck in garnered fruit."

If only love had grown with wealth! But how could it, when the whole system by which wealth was accumulated was based on selfish competition? It is a significant fact that the now familiar phrase "struggle for existence," generally supposed to be Darwin's, was in fact borrowed from Malthus, the political economist—a phrase fit enough for "dragons of the prime that tear each other in the slime," but surely not for the men of the intelligent and advanced nineteenth century. And yet what else does business mean to many, in spite of the enormous increase of wealth since the century began?

It is true, indeed, that Christian principle has all along asserted itself, and the Christian name has been adorned by innumerable Christian business men. They have been the salt which has preserved it from corruption. But it will never be redeemed till love is restored to its place of command.

It is essential, however, to clear thinking on the subject, to distinguish between the love we owe to God and the love we owe to man. Love to God must be supreme; love to man is on the basis of equality: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*." This distinction is continually forgotten by those who say that the law of love is out of place in business. Even so acute a thinker as Herbert Spencer allows himself to condemn what he calls the altruism of Christianity, on the ground that "the entire self-sacrifice" it demands "would be fatal" if

actually applied in ordinary business. But entire self-sacrifice would be asked only towards God, never to our neighbour. Towards him it is not self-sacrifice at all, but equal consideration that is demanded: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

When rightly looked at, indeed, all legitimate business honestly done is done on the principle of loving one's neighbour as one's self. Take the familiar case of buying at a certain cost, and selling at an advanced price. It is far better, manifestly, for a resident of London to buy at his own door a small piece of Dundee goods at a moderate advance in price, than it would be to go himself to Dundee and then find that to get any he must take one hundred times as much as he wants. It would in fact be better for him to pay a much larger advance rather than be left to his own resources. But here the laws which regulate trade come in to cut the advance to the lowest point, so that he pays very little indeed for a great service. And it may be remarked, in passing, that few of us realise at how little cost we obtain the very needful and valuable services which are done us on all hands by our neighbours. According to the working of the laws just referred to, it comes to pass that the services rendered by the different persons engaged in business are set off against each other in very fair equivalents; so that if only strict honesty be preserved, and fair consideration for the poor and weak be given, each man gets in the main just what his services are

worth. Therefore in demanding and accepting a fair market value of what he has to offer, a merchant is literally acting on the principle of loving his neighbour as himself. If he were dishonestly to ask more, he would be sinfully turning the balance on his own side; if he were foolishly to take less, he would be unwisely turning the balance on his neighbour's side.

This brings us face to face with the much-vexed question of competition, on which the truth seems to lie between the two extremes—of those, on the one hand, who declare that competition is the soul of business, and that if only each one does the best he can for his own interest the result will be the best for society; and those, on the other hand, who consider it so irredeemably bad that society should be entirely revolutionised to get rid of it.

That society is suffering sorely from the evils of restricted selfish competition is apparent to any observer; has, in fact, become so apparent, that the old doctrine of pure individualism is practically dead. That articles and services should be cheapened is a good thing, as we have seen, up to a certain point. But is there to be no limit? It is possible, as we know to our sorrow, under the prevalence of the law of demand and supply, for articles and services to be cheapened down to starvation prices. What if the difference in price is paid for by the lives of men and women and poor, shrunken, joyless children? It is because these are so cheap that the things we

buy in the shops are often so shamefully low in price. Oh this endless cutting-down and under-selling! What suffering it means, not only among the toilers at the bottom of the scale, but to hosts of smaller traders, whose profits are so "minished and brought low" by competition that with them it becomes more and more a struggle for bare existence. Such things as these are the outcome of unrestricted selfish competition.

But is it necessary that competition should be selfish and unrestricted? Is there, then, no such thing as what we fondly call English sportsmanship? Where can you have keener competition than in a properly-conducted cricket match or boat race? The rivals strain every nerve to beat their opponents, but if they are gentlemen, not to say Christians, they would not for the world take any mean advantage; they would rather lose every time. Where competitors meet on equal terms, there is no advantage either given or taken. If you are playing a game of chess with one of your own standing, would you thank your opponent for giving you his queen? I trow not; you would not take even a pawn as a gift. All you want of him is fair-play. On the other hand, where the strong and the weak are pitted against each other, there is always some advantage given to the weak, there is no thought of using irresistible force to crush him. Is there any reason why the same spirit should not prevail in the competition of business?

May not the merchant then push his business, lest some of his rivals should suffer? It depends entirely on how the pushing is done. Any increase of business which comes from the rendering of special services to the public is clearly legitimate. It is right that a man's business should be in proportion to the excellence of his work. But what if it be by the cutting down of prices below the point at which a fair rival can afford to sell? What if the strong firm sell for a time at a loss, to starve a small rival out, in the expectation of getting his business after he is crushed? It may be difficult to bring it under the head of dishonesty, but I shall tell you what it certainly is—it is murder.

It is, of course, quite understood that we cannot condemn all selling at a loss. It may be necessary as the result of a fall in prices, or in order to clear out stock, or for some purpose not at all inconsistent with the law of Christ. It all depends on the motive. If the motive be to injure your neighbour, then it is wrong; and if your neighbour is weak and you strong, it is not only wrong, but mean. It is a flagrant violation of the law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Competition there must be, always will be, with human nature as it is. It is not the soul of business; but it is the spur of business, and a spur needed by the average man to make him do his best. If the attempt were made to reduce all to a dead level, to make no difference in result between

the man who does his work well and the man who does it ill, as seems to be the socialistic ideal, then farewell to progress, and even to stability. The national wealth is the product of the national energy and ability. It has grown enormously, and is still growing, even in this crooked and perverse generation, in spite of all the unrighteousness and selfishness which have stood and still stand in the way. But if the inducements which at present spur men to put forth their energy and ability were suddenly withdrawn, without the nobler motives of which we have already spoken taking their place, the volume of the national wealth would run down much faster than it has run up.

Competition and co-operation are sometimes set over against each other as if they were mutually exclusive, though it is surely plain enough that they have always existed side by side, and it seems just as plain that they always will and must. It is to be feared, indeed, that in some cases, notably the development of limited liability companies, the increase of co-operation has aggravated competition. In such companies there is apt to be less heart and less conscience, for there is some truth in the proverb that "Corporations have no souls"; and then the fact that there is less risk is apt to render them more reckless in competition—the result of all which is that some of these great companies have been the chief offenders in driving small traders to the wall. Still it would be as foolish

to condemn all forms of co-operation because of such abuses attaching to these companies, as it is to condemn all competition on account of evils which are associated with it. Without co-operation business would be quite impossible; without competition it would not be nearly so efficient. We certainly have no occasion to promote competition; it needs rather to be checked, to be brought under the control of the golden rule: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." On the other hand, co-operation is to be fostered, but it too needs to come under the sway of the royal law according to the Scripture; and one of the immediate effects of the general application of the law of love to commerce would be the due restriction of competition and the due promotion of co-operation, till the healthy equilibrium of the two forces—the one the centripetal, the other the centrifugal force in the cosmos of commerce—had been reached.

Now of the things we have spoken this is the sum: Our commerce stands in need of sound and thorough conversion from all its selfishness and sin; it needs a right spirit and a new heart—the hard and stony heart taken out of it and a heart of flesh put into it; so will it be restored to its place in the garden of the Lord, its station high up on the holy mountain of God.

It is coming. It is not long since the claim of love to a place in commerce was almost universally disowned. Sermons were preached, and lectures delivered, and even treatises written on commercial morality, which insisted on righteousness only, without a solitary mention of the royal law of love. It is different now. Love is not yet on the throne; but its claims are now widely acknowledged. What is all this aspiring after the brotherhood of man, but a yearning for the enthronement of love in all the relations of life?

Yes, it is coming—with the kingdom it is coming—with the doing of the will of God on earth as it is in heaven it is coming; and it may strengthen our faith in this to observe, that as Ezekiel in his burden of Tyre spoke of the high estate from which the angel of commerce had fallen, so Isaiah in his corresponding prophecy foretells the day of redemption when "her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord," and the prophet Zechariah later on marks the completeness of the regeneration by the striking announcement: "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord."

IX

UNITY AND SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHURCH

IX

UNITY AND SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHURCH[1]

Fathers and Brethren,—Met in Council as representatives of the Evangelical Free Churches of England and Wales, on the threshold of this sixtieth year of her Gracious Majesty's illustrious reign, it surely becomes us, in the name of all our people throughout the land, reverently and gratefully to acknowledge the goodness of Almighty God in still sparing to us our beloved Sovereign, and giving us the prospect of the further lengthening out of a reign which has been honoured and blessed beyond all precedent in our history. Queen Victoria has no more loyal subjects in all her realm than the ministers and members of the Free Churches, and none who join with more heartfelt enthusiasm in the celebration of her Diamond Jubilee, or who pray with more sincerity and earnestness—God Save the Queen!

[1] Presidential Address at the opening of the Second National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches of England and Wales, held in City Temple, London, March 9–11, 1897.

It is not necessary, after the comprehensive and masterly presentation of the nature and objects of our Federation by the last President,[1] that I should attempt again to cover the whole ground. I shall, therefore, take advantage of the opportunity afforded me by your kindness in calling me to this chair to speak on a topic which I trust will be appropriate to the occasion, and of sufficient importance to justify our dwelling on it with some degree of fulness—I mean the necessity of laying stress, no longer on the negative, but on the positive side of our witness and work as Evangelical Free Churches.

The term "Protestant" has been unfortunate in so far as it has suggested the idea that our abiding attitude in religious matters is that of protest. The corruptions of Rome afforded only too good an excuse for adopting that particular attitude at the outset. The pity was that, having once adopted the protesting attitude, it seemed to suit us too well, so that we not only kept it up against the common foe, but took it up against each other. We do not for a moment deny that in most of the divisions which have supervened there has been important positive truth to be maintained, such as the sovereignty of God on the one side, and the freedom of the will on the other; the unity of the great Church of God, and the independence of the local churches; the sole head-

[1] Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, M.A.

ship of Christ, the spirituality of His Church, and the power of His Gospel. But we have been too prone to isolate our testimony instead of combining it with that of others, and to make so much of our own distinctive positions as to misunderstand those of our neighbours; with the result that the Israel of God has been almost lost in the separate tribes, each of them less an Israel, Prince with God, than an Ishmael, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him.

For many years now we have been changing all that. Especially during the last half-century, from the date of the formation of the Evangelical Alliance, have we been growing into better knowledge of each other; and as soon as we succeeded in getting our neighbour's point of view, we of course made the discovery that he was not so hopelessly wrong as we had thought: we found that we had been exaggerating on our side and misunderstanding him. The result has been a rounding off of sharp edges, and our finding it possible to come together without hurting one another.

And now, as we look back on controversies happily dead or hopefully dying, we find that for the most part we have been right in what we affirmed, and wrong in what we denied. We have made the great discovery that the circumference of truth is wide enough to take in all the verities for which we have been called of God to bear our witness. Thus we have been able to drop altogether the

protesting attitude towards each other; and it has gradually dawned upon us that, when we look at our different tenets in truer proportion, we are substantially at one. We have found that as in things essential we have unity, in things doubtful we may well have liberty, and in all things, charity.

The reality and comprehensiveness of our unity in the faith may be inferred from the fact that already the National Council has addressed itself to the preparation of a catechism[1] to cover the whole round of Christian doctrine, practice, and worship, embracing every point which the New Testament teaches us to regard as of essential importance.

When the discovery of this comprehensive unity in essentials showed that no reason for continued isolation remained, the time was clearly ripe for some kind of union. So has it come to pass that, when the electric touch was given at Manchester, and renewed at Leeds, at Birmingham, at Nottingham, there has been a rushing together of the different elements, for the formation, we trust, of a true crystal reflecting the truth of God, from different facets indeed, but for that very reason with a variety which will only increase the beauty.

All this has come about without any surrender of principle. Of those banners which were handed to our fathers to be displayed because of the truth we give up none. The banners of our King are

[1] Issued at the close of 1898.

very many, and in the name of our God we shall display them all, and advance with them, not against any who follow the same great Leader (may God forbid that it should ever be so again, and forgive the past), but against the common foe.

We say this in all sincerity, and mean it in the fullest sense; for our attitude to the Established Church is the same as towards one another. We cannot, of course, compel our brethren to acknowledge us; but we do most heartily acknowledge them as fellow-soldiers in the army of the Lord. We would earnestly desire that in any points in which some of them have diverged from the principles and practice of the Apostolic Church, there should be reform; but, important as we consider this to be, we do not regard it as essential to church fellowship. So far, therefore, from taking up an attitude of hostility, our hope is that when our friends of the Church of England discover that we are not isolated fragments, but a unity—not dissenters merely, but men of the strongest convictions on the greatest of all themes—they will be ready to consider whether the time has not come for the Church of God, in this our land, to close its ranks and march against the common foe.

We believe, indeed, most strenuously in ecclesiastical freedom for ourselves, and would earnestly desire to see the historic Church of our land so emancipated from secular control as to be able to make her own appointments, and administer her

own affairs. This view, held by the vast majority of us, is shared by a certain number, we believe an increasing number, of our Episcopal friends; and when at any time we may express agreement with that wise minority, it surely cannot be charged against us, any more than against them, that we are actuated by feelings of hostility.

But not only have we the most friendly feeling towards the Episcopal Church, but we are at one with her in doctrine, as substantially represented in the Articles of Faith, to which all her clergy give assent. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that many of her clergy seem to repudiate these Articles in favour of a creed more or less approximating to that which is associated in our minds with the Church of Rome; but it is our hope that already a reaction has set in, which will avert the danger so many have been led to fear. And though perhaps a majority of the clergy have been infected with the prevailing spirit, it is our belief that the Church, as a whole, is sound at heart, and that if only the laity had their proper weight in her councils, we should still see her taking the position to which she is entitled, as one of the foremost churches of the Reformation.

Our immense indebtedness to men of light and leading in the Church of England has been so often acknowledged that I shall not speak of it in general, but only mention this, that we could set forth every one of the strong positions which as Evangelical

Free Churchmen we hold, in words borrowed from some of the best and most famous of Anglican divines. I believe indeed that it would be well for our literary committee to form a *catena* of these passages in order to show how much we are at one with the true heart of the Church of England. Let me only quote two as a specimen. The first is from the Rev. Professor Sanday, of Oxford, and I quote it specially because it is based on recent investigations into early Church history, a subject on which he is one of the highest authorities:—

"The inquiries which have of late been made into the early history of the Christian ministry seem to me to result in an Eirenicon between the Churches. The dove returns with an olive branch in its mouth. . . . Our confessional differences are indeed reflected in primitive Christianity, but not as mutually exclusive. They represent not conflicting and irreconcilable conceptions of the original constitution of the Church, but only successive stages in the growth of that constitution. The Church passed through a congregational stage, and (if we exclude the activity of the Apostles as something exceptional) it also passed through a Presbyterian stage. If any one wishes to single out these stages, and to model the society to which he belongs upon them, he is zealous for a pure and primitive polity; he clings to the Bible and what he finds in the Bible; he will not allow himself to wander far from that ideal which he thinks that Christ and His Apostles have left

him. Can we condemn him for this? Shall we not rather say εὐδοκιμείτω καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ?" (*Expositor*, Third Series, vol. viii. p. 335.)

And in making such frank and generous recognition of the Scriptural warrant of the position of others, he does not abandon his own, for he goes on to say, "Nor yet need that prevent us from thinking that we have 'a more excellent way' of our own."

The other quotation is from a bishop, taken from an *embarras de richesses* of deliverances from the bench:—

"The unity begotten among sects by this looking to one individual Lord will be spiritual, not mechanical. It will come not by any sly foisting in among the sects of each other's phraseology, or any imitation of each other's measures—not by cunning or concealment, but by a candour that is transparent precisely because it is above partisanship and selfishness—by a speech whose mightiest power lies in its sincerity, its unction, its evangelical necessity—not, in short, by the will of men at all, but by so making the Saviour of our souls the centre, substance, and inspiration of the doctrine that love for Him sends every smaller passion out, and there is oneness only because there is One." (Bishop Huntingdon, "Sermons for the New Life," p. 360.)

The only objection one has to this is the use of the ugly word "sects." Professor Sanday, it will have been observed, did not hesitate to follow the

Scripture in using the word Churches, and in every case he spells it with a capital C. But Bishop Huntingdon evidently intends no disrespect, for he classes his own denomination with all the rest, so that the sentiment is the same as that so beautifully expressed by the Friend poet:—

> "We faintly hear, we dimly see,
> In differing phrase we pray;
> But dim or clear, we own in Thee
> The light, the truth, the way."

There are practically now only two great divisions of the Church of Christ in this country: Sacerdotalists and Evangelicals. On each side of that dividing line there is only one party. The Anglican and Roman Sacerdotalists have been drawing so close together, that it is often difficult to distinguish between them; the only difference remaining in many cases being the acknowledgment or disavowal of allegiance to the Pope. On the other side of the line there is again only one party; for we are speaking now, not of Theism but of Christianity. Our Unitarian friends are Theists, and are at one with us in questions of ethics, and in maintaining the reality and value of spiritual phenomena as against those who would resolve all that is high and holy into mere matter and force; and we join with all right-thinking men in acknowledging our manifold indebtedness to many of their great men, notably to that venerable saint whom we

all delight to honour, Dr. James Martineau. Nor do we deny that there are those known as Unitarians who may show a trust in Christ and a loyalty to Him as Lord and Master which might put to shame many of us. But while many of them are better than their creed, and many of us are much worse than ours, it yet remains quite obvious that it is not possible there should be co-operation on Christian lines between those who look to Christ as occupying the throne of the universe, and those who regard Him only as a good man taking rank with Socrates, and Sakya-Muni, and Confucius, and Epictetus. We cannot sing the same hymns; and if we cannot join in the same worship, it would not be showing them due respect were we to ask them to join us. We do not here enter into any discussion as to the proper meaning of the word "Christian." All I say about it is, that in the sense in which we use the word Christian as applying to those who acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as the only-begotten Son of God, now living and reigning with the Father and Holy Ghost as One God—there are only two great parties in England, the Sacerdotalists and the Evangelicals.

And notwithstanding the portentous growth of sacerdotalism during the last half-century, the vast majority is still on the Evangelical side. In making this statement I am not resting on the remarkable statistics furnished by our last President in his inaugural address, nor on those recently given by Mr.

Howard Evans in the *Contemporary Review*. These were most gratifying as showing the great strength of the Free Churches in themselves. But in addition to this, we have to add the Evangelicals of the Church of England, a minority it is to be feared among the clergy, but we verily believe a vast majority of the laity of the Church.

How is it then that the Sacerdotalists have been making such phenomenal progress? It is too large a question to attempt to answer here in full; but this at all events is certain, that the reason why our preponderating force has told so little in the past has been that while they have been thoroughly united, we have been miserably divided. So far as the Evangelical party in the Church of England is concerned, its force is almost completely neutralised by their separation from us with whom they agree, and their formal union with those from whom they profoundly differ; and we Free Churchmen have not exerted a tenth part of the force we might have wielded, if only years ago we had drawn together as we are doing now.

Is our great object then to unite our forces so as to attack sacerdotalism? Certainly not. We do not set ourselves to attack any who are trying in their own way to follow Christ, however mistaken we may believe them to be. We believe in overcoming evil with good. What is wanted is that "by manifestation of the truth we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

It is a comparatively easy thing to make error manifest. In this case it is particularly easy. Not only can it be shown that there is not a shred of authority in the words of Christ or of His Apostles for any of the sacerdotal contentions, but also that they are all condemned by the whole tone and tenor of the New Testament. Still, when all this is done, the question remains, what have *you* to put in place of that which you set aside? Your views may be all right, but the woes of the age cannot be healed by views; the hunger of men's souls cannot be satisfied with mere principles, we must see them at work; and for making this demand we have the highest authority: "By their fruits ye shall know them."

We have had many meetings lately all over the country for the demonstration of Free Church principles. Now it is well enough to "demonstrate" at a meeting; but a much more substantial demonstration in actual life and work is urgently needed. Indeed, the only way effectually to commend the truth we hold to every man's conscience is to show it in full operation, curing the evils which abound in all our churches, and healing the woes under which the world still is groaning.

Let us then proceed to look at the main positive doctrines of the New Testament, for which we are called as Evangelical Churches to bear witness, and inquire how far we are giving a demonstration of them to the age in which we live.

Doctrines of the *New Testament* I say, because, though we yield to none in our appreciation of the majesty and true inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures, we cannot forget that the forms and orders of the Old Covenant are superseded, because fulfilled, in Christ. For the great principles of sacred truth as gradually unfolded, especially through the prophetical teaching, to the Children of Israel, and for their application to the national life under continually varying conditions, we betake ourselves to the Old Testament; but for things ecclesiastical, for the doctrines of the Church, its forms, its orders, its worship, its administration, we are expressly prohibited from going back to the Old Covenant, which, on the testimony of the prophets themselves, notably of the Prophet Jeremiah (xxxi. 31), as well as of Christ and His Apostles, is replaced by the New. What then are the great doctrines of the New Testament for which as Free Churches we stand, and of which we are called to give a demonstration?

Broadly speaking we stand

I. For the Spirituality of the New Testament Church as distinguished from the formality of ecclesiasticism. The great difference between the Old Covenant and the New is the difference between the outward and formal on the one hand, and the inward and spiritual on the other. So long as we are in the body it is impossible that form can be alto-

gether dispensed with, but it is reduced to a minimum in the New Testament. The whole drift of our Lord's teaching was against laying stress on form, and for concentration of thought and energy on the things of the Spirit. Whole books are written for the express purpose of guarding against the disposition to revert to what the Apostle calls "the beggarly elements" of the superseded Judaism. To us it seems nothing less than astounding that ritualism should be able to rear its head in England, in a land where the Epistle to the Galatians, with its crushing condemnation of it all, is freely circulated among the people. And it is no less marvellous that things outward and visible, such as external organisation, priestly succession, and sacramental forms, should be made the essential notes of the Church, in defiance, not of particular passages merely, but of the entire drift and scope of the great Epistle to the Hebrews. This book was written for the encouragement of humble Christians under sore depression because their simple services in upper rooms seemed so poor and bald compared with the elaborate ceremonial of the historic Temple from which, after conforming as long as in conscience they could, they were obliged at last to turn sorrowfully away; and what was the message of encouragement? Was it, "Only wait patiently and you will have all these things: you will see churches as magnificent as the Temple itself; there will be priests in them with robes as costly as that of the

high priest; the humble bishop of the little congregation will have blossomed out into a great dignitary with a high title; 'the breaking of bread' will have been turned into a sacrificial offering; and the ritual of the church will have become as elaborate as the most aesthetic fancy can desire." Not a word of it. The message is: "You have all you need now; in all these things in which the Temple seems to have the advantage over you, you really have the advantage over it, if only you have faith to realise it. Look up, look up, take a firm hold on the unseen and eternal verities, let your minds grasp the great thought of 'the Church of the first-born which are written in heaven,' and the want of ecclesiastical organisation of the earthly kind will trouble you no more; 'consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession,' think of His sacrifice for sins offered once for all, His intercession within the veil, His sure word of absolution and benediction, and you will see that an earthly priest is quite out of place. Only exercise that faith which is 'the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,' and your discouragement will cease; you will realise that the humble worshippers in the upper room, simple and bald though their worship appear, have an environment of the Unseen which makes even the Temple itself and all the splendour of its service seem 'beggarly' in comparison." Such is the gist of the Epistle to the Hebrews; and its doctrine of the

spirituality of the Church is in harmony with the whole of the New Testament.

We claim then to stand for the spirituality of the New Testament; but what if our spirituality is only in the New Testament? What if some candid friend of the High Church party say to us: "Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works"? Are there not hundreds of the ritualistic clergy who might in this way most effectually turn the tables on us? There is much of formalism in their views; but is there not often the deepest spirituality in their life and work? Therein lies their power. It is true that crowds may be attracted by the mere "trappings and suits" of ritual; but no intelligent man can assign this as the reason for the progress of the ritualistic party. It is due above all things to the strength of their spiritual convictions, to the depth of their loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ, to the self-sacrificing devotion of their lives, to the fervour of their piety. Not because of, but in spite of their erroneous views and unscriptural practices have they taken hold on so many of the earnest and loyal Christians of England.

It must be remembered that forms and symbols are not evil in themselves, or they would not have been so liberally used in the Old Covenant. They are good—for babes, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews suggests. Ritualism is the Kindergarten of religious worship, and was, therefore (as

St. Paul shows in Galatians iv.), just what was wanted, in the days when the world was young, for "the heir so long as he was a child"; but now that "the fulness of the time has come," we are expected to put away childish things. Yet who can deny that an excellent Kindergarten may be much better than a poor and wholly inefficient High School?

Hence, unless we are truly and deeply spiritual, we are necessarily at a disadvantage with our ritualistic rivals. The celebration of the Mass is an imposing rite to any one who chooses to look at it. The man who wanders into a Roman Catholic or High Ritualistic Church, because he has nothing better to do, can look on with interest for half an hour or more, and perhaps some vague notion of solemnity may be awakened in him; but let such a man come into a church where the service is conducted according to the simplicity of the New Testament, and what hope is there of exciting the very slightest interest in his dead soul, unless there be in the assembly those tremors and thrills of the Spirit which make the Word quick and powerful, able to penetrate into the deep recesses of the man's nature, till some chord is reached which, long silent though it may have been, may yet be touched and made to vibrate in the breath of God.

The doctrine of the Apostles is good and true; but we must be true to it, or our faith is vain:

without works and therefore dead. Moreover, the very simplest worship is not free from the danger of formalism; and when church services such as ours are bereft of the breath of life, as, alas, they too often are, they are of all services most miserable; they are as vain and futile, as wearisome and nugatory, as anything in this world can be. Therefore, what the Evangelical Churches need above all things is a baptism of the Spirit. Without it, they are nothing; with it, they can do all things; they can fully accomplish their mission, carrying the Gospel of the Kingdom in its freedom, spirituality, and power all over the land.

In insisting on this high spirituality we by no means undervalue the work to be done in the sphere of the secular. On the contrary, it is because the work to be done there is so urgent and so difficult, that we feel the need of enlisting in its interest the very highest powers it is possible for us to command. With the baptism of the Spirit there would come a passion for righteousness, an uncontrollable yearning for the triumph of love, for the realisation of the brotherhood of man. We should feel constrained to utter our voice on the great moral questions of the day, and to bring our influence to bear on all movements which make for the improvement of social relations. But in so doing we should be lifted far above the arena of party politics. If our inspiration be in the first

instance political, our true life is paralysed and by consequence our power is gone; we abdicate the high position of the Church of Christ, and become a mere league for worldly ends, a mere annex to some political machine. But if we exalt that which is spiritual, seeking our inspiration from above, then the streams of our church life will have head enough to do great work for the community; and if the waters were united, it would be a very Niagara of force, available for the production of light and heat and power enough to elevate and purify society and transform it into the Kingdom of God.

We regard it, therefore, as in every respect one of the most hopeful signs of our movement that it is becoming more and more spiritual. This has been specially evident in the Midlands, where our progress has been most rapid, and our hold on the country is the strongest. The spiritual power which has been developed in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, and throughout what we must surely apologise in this point of view for still calling "The Black Country," has been such as to thrill the hearts of those who have observed it with a new and glorious hope—not for the future of our churches alone, but for the political and social future of our country; for if only the Free Churches all over the land would follow the example thus happily set them, there would be a revival of spirituality, and, with it, of zeal for the national

character and welfare, which would render it no longer possible for the people of Christ to be silent when He called them to speak out, to be apathetic when there were wrongs to be righted, or to stand idly by when the battle cry was shouted, "To the help of the Lord against the mighty."

The Oxford movement, as the late Dean Church in his account of it candidly acknowledges, began in the region of politics as a counter-blast to the bugle call of the Reform Bill. Had it remained on that lower plane it would have been dead long ago; but it quickly passed out of the political region into a far higher; and it was because its leaders were men of God, of saintly character and marvellous spiritual power, and at the same time far above the frippery of mere ritual, that it has exercised such a mighty influence on subsequent history. And perhaps it can scarcely be denied that in some of our earliest Nonconformist Councils, as they were called at first, the inspiration was to a large extent political; but since this Free Church movement, guided as we firmly believe by the Spirit of God, took definite shape and gave promise of covering the land, it has been lifted into the higher region of the spiritual and eternal; and there (God helping us) we mean that it shall abide, not indeed to detain us on the Mount of Transfiguration, but to send us down into the plain with new sympathy with the sorrows of humanity, and new power to

answer the cry of distress, to cast out the tormenting demon, to heal the lunatic child.

II. Leaving now the general idea of spirituality, we come to the particular doctrines for which as Free Churches we stand. These are the spiritual doctrine of the Church of God, of the Priesthood of Christ and of His people, and of the Ministration of the Spirit.

(i.) The doctrine of *the Church*. We find in the New Testament references to local churches, such as the church at Jerusalem, or at Antioch, the church in the house of Nymphas, the church throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria (Acts ix. 31, R.V.); but beyond these, above them all, or rather comprising them all, we find reference made to the Church, not local, but catholic, which is "the Body of Christ." This in the New Testament is alone dignified with the title "The Church," without any limiting geographical description. It is not an aggregate of separate units, but a body, constituted such, not by any outward bonds, but by the indwelling of one Spirit, who animates each and all of its members. The lucid exposition by our last President of the Scriptural catholicism as distinguished from that which is merely Roman or Anglican, will be fresh in the memory of us all. I have seen no attempt to disprove what he said; and I do not wonder, for it is impossible. The Scriptures of the

New Testament lend no countenance whatever to any smaller conception of the Church catholic than that which includes in it every true disciple of Christ, every member of "His body the Church."

Such is our faith; where are our works? The Roman and Anglican have a comparatively poor and limited conception of the Church; but, such as it is, they live up to it, they are thorough churchmen, they are not individualistic, they are not narrow in the small sense in which many of us are narrow. The earnest and devoted clergyman is as faithful to his parish work as any of us can be, but he never narrows his ecclesiastical horizon to its limits, he has ever a grand, inspiring, and soul-enlarging conception of the Church to which his supreme allegiance is due. Now we would not have any of our Free Church ministers less faithful to their parish work, or less conscious of immediate responsibility to the Lord Jesus Christ; but we would have them widen their horizon from the parish to the country at large, and not only so, but from the particular denomination to the Church catholic. We have been far too individualistic in our personal religion, and too denominational in our church life. We *must* make the Church catholic no mere vision in the air, but a great reality never to be lost sight of, never to be made light of, never to be subordinated to personal, congregational, or sectarian interests.

We have no fault to find with what are called

High Church views, except that they are not high enough. And in this I do not refer merely to our friends stopping short at the Fathers without ascending, as we do, to the Apostles and to Christ Himself; but to the stopping short at the denomination, be it Anglican or Roman, without ascending to the higher unity of the Church catholic. We thank our friends of the Oxford movement for their protest against individualism and their summons to large views of the historic Church. The age had much to learn from them; but we must better their instruction, we must summon to still higher views of the Church. It may be remembered that the late Herber Evans, whose loss we mourn to-day, in his opening address to the Congregational Union, gave the Welsh version of a well-known passage thus: "Climb higher, thou herald of Zion, to a very high mountain." Yes, that is the watchword for the Free Churches to-day: Climb higher, higher than the heights of England, higher than the seven hills of Rome, even as high as "the mountain of the Lord's house," which the prophet assures us "shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it."

There is the hopeful outlook for the reunion of all the Churches. There have been two schemes of reunion before the public in recent years: the sacerdotal scheme for outward and formal unity, and the evangelical for inward and spiritual. The former

has been completely destroyed. The Pope had the key of it, and what use he has made of this power of the keys we all know. No more reunion of the churches along that line for ever!

The one hope now is along the other line, the inward and spiritual unity of the New Testament, the key of which is in the hand of Him "who shutteth and no man openeth, and who openeth and no man shutteth"; and He will never shut out any in whom His Spirit dwells. Here is the wide open door for the reunion of the Churches, and never was there a better opportunity than now for closing our ranks. When two great streams are flowing from the one fountain and one of them is dammed up, we may expect the other to be greatly increased in volume and in power. So, may we not hope that as the longing of the age for the reunion of the Churches has been beaten back from the lock-gates of the Pope, it will flow with redoubled force through the flood-gates of the Church universal? Thus the flowing tide is with *us* now.

If only this reunion could be brought about, not in the shape of a vast corporation, but of a real unity of spirit, which would lead us to consult together and work together for the kingdom of God, what a mighty inspiration it would be! If there was such power in the generous enthusiasm which the leaders of the Oxford movement inspired for the Anglican Church, what would be the force of a zeal which would take in the far greater con-

ception of the Church catholic? It is a great thing to belong to a mighty empire. It was a great thing to be able to say "I am a Roman citizen," at a time when a hundred and twenty millions owed allegiance to the imperial city. It is a great thing to belong to the British Empire which reckons up its three hundred and fifty millions; but when we take in the vast thought of the Church catholic, from righteous Abel on to the last of the redeemed, the greatest empires the world has ever known are overshadowed by it. If only we had faith enough to realise it, how our spirits would rise, how our souls would thrill, how our hearts would burn within us; with what ardour and devotion, what energy and perseverance, what faith and glorious hope should we spend and be spent for the Kingdom of our Lord!

(ii.) The New Testament doctrine of *the priesthood.* Here again it is very easy to show that the only priesthood recognised in the New Testament is the priesthood of Christ and of all believers; that the term priest is not once used to designate an order of ministry in the Church, and that not once are sacerdotal functions assigned to any of the Church's officers. We do not indeed forget that many of our friends in the Church of England use the word, not as meaning priest, but as presbyter writ small; but inasmuch as this writing of it small has graven the error of sacerdotalism into the heart

of that Church as with an iron pen, it is surely time for our evangelical friends and sympathisers to set aside once and for ever the misleading contraction, and return to the scriptural "presbyter," which happily is free from heretical associations, notwithstanding Milton's clever taunt of presbyter as "priest writ large"; for none knew better than he the vast difference between the presbyterian and the priestly ideas of the Christian ministry.

But here again, while we have stoutly protested against the unscriptural priesthood, have we faithfully and fully set before the people of England the true priesthood? Has not the priestly work of Christ become obscured or relegated to the background in much of our preaching? We may exalt Him as the Prophet of Humanity, we may proclaim Him as Lord and Master, we may set forth His life as our pattern and ideal, and yet fail entirely to do justice to His high priesthood, the sacrifice of His Cross, the power of His intercession, the efficacy of His absolution, the wealth of His benediction. Sinful man must have a priest. So long as the consciousness of sin is not awakened, men may be satisfied to hear of duty and ideals and the like; so it is possible for an essay-writer or lecturer to get round him a congregation—of a sort—of people who are perhaps moral and respectable, but in no true sense Christian. Unless the sense of sin be awakened, the need of Christ will not be felt, and true devotion to Him will be unknown. But as

soon as the sense of sin is awakened, the cry of the soul is for a priest; and if the great High Priest is not set forth in the all-sufficient sacrifice He offered for us on earth, and the intercession He is making for us now in heaven, men will clamour for an earthly priest, and find security in the unsupported claims of a usurping hierarchy. We hope times have greatly improved among evangelical Christians since Principal Cave published his book on "The Scriptural Doctrine of Sacrifice," but the warning he gave then is not wholly unneeded yet: "We venture to assert," he said, "that it is because so little has been heard of late in Protestant pulpits of the Christian doctrines of priesthood and sacrifice, that the Romish exaggerations of those truths have found a house ready swept and garnished for their reception."

As to the priesthood of all believers, no thought is more familiar as a thought, but where is the demonstration? We are not backward in using it as a weapon to fight the sacerdotalists with; we tell them that the priesthood of the New Testament is not their priesthood at all, but that of all believers. We may not, however, be so successful in showing them the priests. Can we point to ourselves and our congregations and say, "Here is the true priesthood"? They have something to show—men in flesh and blood who are at least robed as priests, and who perhaps in their lives are better specimens of the true priesthood than most of us. They have

their sacrifice, their incense, their absolution. Of what avail is it to put over against all that a mere doctrine, a mere phrase, "the priesthood of all believers"? We must not only claim the privilege, but exercise it by offering daily the sacrifice of all we have and all we are to God, making intercession daily with prevailing power, carrying, to all whom we can reach, the Gospel of salvation with its free offer of absolution and sanctifying grace, and living lives which flow out, to all with whom we come in contact, in streams of benediction.

This important subject might have been developed at much greater length, but we must leave time for

(iii.) Our third point, *the ministration of the Spirit.* Here again we stand for the doctrine that the Spirit was given, not to the officers of the Church for distribution to the rest, but to the whole Church: "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," and this, we are told, in fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, which extends the privilege even to the slaves. We believe indeed that there are special gifts for specific work, so that there is a bestowment of special grace on those who are called to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, qualifying them for their sacred office. We believe, therefore, in ministerial orders. We believe that in addition to "the Apostles and Prophets" who, and who alone, are associated with Christ Himself in

laying the foundation, there has been a continual succession of "evangelists and pastors and teachers," "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ" (R.V.) These all have the promise of "grace sufficient"; but the giving of it is retained in the hands of the ever-living Head of the Church, not delegated to any set of men. There is not a trace of suggestion that the stream of grace flows no longer direct from heaven, from the fulness which is in Christ the Lord, but is to be sought for in an earthly channel flowing darkly, uncertainly, sometimes turbidly down the ages. There is not the slightest hint that our Lord gave a supply to the first Apostles and told them to hand it on to their successors, and these to those who should come after them. Least of all can we reconcile ourselves to the notion of this being done in such an arbitrary and artificial way that the question whether or not there is a supply of it in the Church of England now must depend on the result of a historical investigation to discover whether a certain ceremony was performed at the Nag's Head or at Lambeth Palace. Could anything be less apostolic? Who can conceive of St. Paul wrestling with a Nag's Head controversy? Can you not hear him saying: "Oh foolish Romans and Anglicans, who hath bewitched you? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?"

The stream from heaven is flowing still. Christ

has not abdicated His throne of grace. His ear is not heavy that He cannot hear, nor His arm shortened that He cannot save; and when a company of pastors and teachers are gathered together in the all-prevailing Name as in the olden time,[1] to lay hands on one who has been called of the Spirit to the ministry of the Gospel, and when they together cry to Him for the baptism of the Holy Ghost, think not He can say them nay; the answer comes, grace is given, the succession is maintained, not by transmission, but by direct gift from Christ of His Holy Spirit, who ever proceedeth from the Father and the Son. And if any one raiseth the question of validity of orders, we call to mind what the Apostle recommends for the purpose of settling it: not, "Try the hands whether they were of a bishop," but "Try the spirits whether they are of God."

Here again, however, the great thing is not to show that we are right and others wrong according to the Scriptures, but to make it manifest that we do have the Spirit of Christ. Let the Gospel as preached in our pulpits be shown to be the power of God unto salvation, and the sacraments as administered in our churches the outward and visible signs of grace which is inward and invisible indeed, but nevertheless shines in the faces and glows in the lives of those who have received our baptism and been nourished with us at the table of the Lord;

[1] *Cf.* Acts xiii. 1–4, and 1 Tim. iv. 14.

and then we may lay aside our arguments as no longer needed. Let us have in all our churches "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power," and the question of validity of orders will soon be as dead as the Supralapsarian controversy.

As with orders, so with the grace of the sacraments. It is in no sense material and fleshly, but only and wholly spiritual. The association of regeneration with baptism we gladly acknowledge; but that the mere form or act of baptism, by whomsoever administered, accomplishes regeneration, we strenuously deny. Again, that by the ordinance of the Holy Communion we are so made partakers of Christ, that not only are our spirits refreshed but our very bodies become sanctified as temples of the Holy Ghost—this we acknowledge and rejoice in; but that the mere eating of bread and drinking of wine, by whomsoever blessed, accomplishes this great result, we are constrained, in loyalty to the truth of God, wholly to deny.

Most devoutly do we believe in the Real Presence; but we have too reverent a conception of our exalted Lord to insist that there must be some materialising process before we can have it. Spirit is as real as matter; nay more real, if there is to be comparison. In the deepest sense God and the soul are not only the great facts of the universe, but "the only facts for me," as Browning says in "La Saisiaz." And it is when we use the symbols of the sacrament, "not after a corporal or carnal manner," not as weights to

keep us down, but as wings to raise us up—above the gross earth of sense into the clear heaven of faith—it is then that we find in the sacrament of love the transcendent and glorious and enduring reality our Lord intended it to be.

Thus throughout our doctrine of the Church, its orders and its sacraments, we claim like the Apostle that we "worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh."

We claim no finality in our views of truth. We have much to learn yet, not only from the Scriptures, but from one another; ay, and something too no doubt even from those who seem to be furthest from the simplicity that is in Christ. But further enlightenment is not our greatest need. We have already a faith high enough and pure enough and true enough, if only it found full expression in our life. *The* great need—we repeat it once more in closing—is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And already we have the earnest of it. We see it here and there in the unparalleled success which has attended our united evangelistic work. We see it everywhere, as we look back on all the way by which we have been led in this great movement of the age towards the reunion of Christendom. Fifty years ago, the Evangelical Alliance was beginning to lift up its voice on behalf of all evangelical Christians in the declaration, *Unum corpus sumus in Christo.* For twenty-five of the fifty years we were meeting in

prayer and conference, and learning to know and love and trust each other. Then began the era of federation. In 1873 the idea of a great Presbyterian Federation took definite shape, and since then there have been six Ecumenical Councils of Presbyterians, the delegates representing a constituency of about twenty millions of Christians. So, too, there have been Ecumenical Councils of Methodism, representing a constituency probably quite as large—one of the marvels of Church history, when we remember that it is little more than a hundred years since the saintly Father of the movement passed away. Then there was in 1891 the great International Congregational Council in London, in some respects most noteworthy of all, as giving a demonstration of real spiritual unity where many had seen only a multitude of separate units. The great Missionary Council in London; the centenary of the Baptist Missionary Society, which formed another great rallying-point, not for Baptists alone, but for all evangelical Christians; the similar celebration of the truly catholic London Missionary Society; and the Students' Christian Federation, formed in Sweden in 1895 for the enlistment of young Christians all the world over in the sacred cause of the thorough and speedy evangelisation of all mankind—such great movements as these have marked the ripeness of the time for that which was especially to distinguish the last decade of the century: the federal union of the Churches themselves in our own country

—an object-lesson to all the world; for now we look forward to a federation of all the federations, with the whole world as our field.

This movement we firmly believe to be not of man but of God. Those of us who were present at its inception had no idea whereto it would grow. It has been born, not made. Had the house been of our building we should have laboured in vain, but we humbly believe that its builder and maker is God. There has been no sound of axe or trowel. The Spirit of God has been moving in the hearts of our people all over the land. Difficulties which seemed insurmountable have disappeared. Valleys have been exalted and mountains and hills brought low, the crooked has been made straight and the rough places plain. Is it then presumptuous to believe that it is the way of the Lord which has been prepared before us?

This is the year of another Lambeth Conference, the Ecumenical Council of the Anglican Churches. They too have felt the breath which fills our sails. May the Lord prepare a great blessing for that distinguished and important gathering. May His Holy Spirit be poured out on them as well as on us. May we and they alike have such a baptism of love that we shall both draw very close to Christ, so close that neither can fail to recognise the other as of the brotherhood in the Lord. Thus may the way be prepared in God's own time for a Council of the Church Catholic in England, binding together

in sacred bonds all who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as the one Redeemer of the soul, the one great King and Head of the Church, the one almighty Saviour of the world. And if the Christians of England could give to the world such a demonstration of the unity of the New Testament—the unity of the "one flock, one Shepherd"—might we not hope that the day would not be far distant when even the Church of Rome would hear the Shepherd's voice, welcoming His Holy Gospel in its simplicity and purity, throwing down the barriers she has long been building around herself, and so preparing the way for Christians of every name, from remotest west to farthest east, to hear the same voice, and gather together in the one Name which is above every name—a new, grand, final fulfilment of the great announcement, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become *one flock, one Shepherd.*" "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

X

OLIVER CROMWELL

X

OLIVER CROMWELL[1]

"Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse saith, and the man who was raised on high saith, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel:

"The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was upon my tongue.

"The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me: One that ruleth over men righteously, that ruleth in the fear of God,

"He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds; when the tender grass springeth out of the earth, through clear shining after rain.

"Verily my house is not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for it is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He maketh it not to grow.

"But the ungodly shall be all of them as thorns to be thrust away, for they cannot be taken with the hand:

"But the man that toucheth them must be armed with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place."—2 Sam. xxiii. 1–7.

It is satisfactory that the critics are good enough to allow the possibility, if not the probability, of

[1] Sermon preached at Huntingdon on 27th April 1899, on the occasion of the tercentenary celebration of the birth of Oliver Cromwell.

these words being genuine. As such therefore we shall accept them. They would be interesting if we knew them simply as the utterance of a nameless saint, but viewed as the unveiling of the inner shrine of the heart of David they are full of interest and pathos. The world in which he had been so conspicuous a figure is fading away from him, and eternity is opening out before him. At this solemn time all that is merely superficial in his thought shrinks away and leaves standing there before us the man himself as in the sight of God. We see the ruling passion strong in death, and discover what a noble passion it was. We see into the depths of his soul when he is at his best, not as he sometimes appeared in days of weakness and sin. These were but eddies in the stream, the backwater of the surface; here is the deep, strong current which has been flowing Godward through all the windings of his checkered life. His predecessor Saul had many noble qualities, and it would be easy to set the one in contrast to the other, to the serious disadvantage of the younger: but take the life of each as a whole, and we can quite well understand how Saul was rejected, and David with all his faults accepted as on the whole and in the main the man after God's own heart.

Let us then look at this last utterance of David, and see what we can learn from it of the man. (1) The first thing which strikes us is his strong and invincible faith. We see it in the way he speaks of

himself, as son of Jesse indeed, but also as "the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob." Saul whom he superseded had been the Lord's anointed; but he knew it was of God that from the shepherd's home he had been called to take into his hands the reins of power. Again it is as sweet singer of Israel he speaks of himself, but he knows that he speaks not merely as a poet but in the name of God Most High: "The Spirit of God spake by me, and His Word was on my tongue." The same faith shines out in the noble ideal he has set before him in his public life, and its tenacity and invincibility are seen in the way he keeps it still before him under the sense of personal failure which clouds his dying day. Clearly this is a man of faith—mighty faith in God.

(2) Look now at the high ideal of his life. This is set forth, in verses 4 and 5, in broken utterance as of something which could not be realised now in his day, but which, though for a time shattered ou the rocks of hard reality, is not on that account to be given up as hopeless, but rather projected into the future for realisation in some happier time in God's own way. It is one of the faults of any formal translation, revised or unrevised, that it must fill in the gaps in broken sentences. But suppose we take it as it is, remembering that it is the vanishing ideal of a dying king: "A Ruler over men—just—ruling in the fear of God—and—as the light of the morning at sunrise, as a morning without clouds—green upon

the earth in the sunshine after rain." Here we see not only his mighty faith but his glowing patriotism. His poet's eye has often seen the exquisite beauty, the rich promise of the broad landscape, lying in the sunshine after the warm rain has freshened all and started on every side the springing life—why should it not be so in the world of men? If only I could be the people's sun and rain, if I could only be the Ruler God intends for them, if only my rule could be righteous and ever in the fear of God, would not the state be as happy as the landscape after showers of April, and under the sun of May? Would not such a righteous, God-fearing administration be as the morning of a new and happy day? Such was—such in all his better moments had been—the ideal of the dying king.

(3) But, as we have seen, it had remained unrealised. How does this affect him? Does it shake his faith in God? Nay, it only leads him to fall back on the Divine faithfulness, the "covenant ordered in all things and sure," and to seek an explanation of all that has been disappointing in the imperfection of the instruments God had to use, and the refractoriness of the people with whom they had to deal: "Verily my house is not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for it is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He maketh it not to grow. But the ungodly shall be all of them as thorns to be thrust away, for they cannot be taken

with the hand: but the man that toucheth them must be armed with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place." Here we see the unrelenting sternness of the old king, the strong and abiding conviction that those who were the means of frustrating his efforts for the attainment of his ideal must be utterly destroyed. Let us hope that in this conviction, rather than in any personal vindictiveness, is to be found the explanation of the dying charge to Solomon to execute relentless vengeance on Joab and on Shimei.

Thus from these remarkable words we have drawn a portrait of David, king of Israel. We have looked beneath the surface of his checkered life, and have found the man of God, the man of blood and iron, the man of lofty ideal and ambition of the noblest, and faith undimmed through failure and defeat. And who is there among us who has not seen emerging from the old canvas the face and form of the man of God whose life and work we call to memory to-day—Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England?

The face is not without a wart, and Oliver, as we all know, was the last man to hide it; and there have been those who have discovered nothing else—who have lacked either the ability or the honesty to look beneath the rough exterior to the noble soul of him—who have judged him as those men judge David who dwell upon the one sin which he himself is the last to hide, and fail to discover the

deep fountains of faith and hope and true devotion which are the glory of his life. What the utterances of the sweet singer of Israel have been to David, the Letters and Speeches as edited by Carlyle have been to Oliver Cromwell, a revelation of the man, not as he appeared to shallow men of the world, who could judge him only by themselves, but as he was in the sight of God, and as he is now appreciated by all who know how to estimate purity of motive, integrity of character, fervour of spirit, indomitable courage, unswerving loyalty of conscience, and unfailing faith in God.

I shall not, however, make any attempt to draw a full-length portrait of the great Oliver. This is a sermon with a text, and to the text accordingly I shall adhere, and by doing so confine myself to the points which have emerged in our study of the last words of David.

I

We begin, therefore, with the faith which was the root principle of his life, and without which it is as hopeless to understand him as it would be to understand Abraham or any of the roll of honour in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Why was it that the old astronomers spoke of Mars and Jupiter as "planets"—wanderers, erratic orbs? Because they looked at them from the standpoint of the earth. And how did the so-called

planets in the end fall into the order in which all astronomers see them moving now? By recognising the central attraction of the sun, and construing every movement in relation to that all-pervading force. So has it been with the estimate of Oliver Cromwell. Judge him by the sordid motives of the average selfish life, and you make him a monster and a hypocrite. But bear in mind that there was a Sun of his soul, that faith in God was the mainspring of his life, and all is, we do not say justified, but certainly explained in consistency with that high estimate of his personal character which is happily no longer confined to those who approve of his policy.

For his faith was not a mere fraction of his life, a thing of Sunday and of church, but governed the whole of it; and what it took hold of was not a theory of church order, or a fancy of ceremonial, or a thing of convention and custom. It took firm and undying hold of God and His eternal law of righteousness. The questions of all questions for him were these: What does God will? what does righteousness demand? He may have made mistakes, did make mistakes as all men do, in interpreting the law of God and in applying the law of righteousness; but that these were "the master lights of all his seeing" and the controlling principles of all his conduct is now made so plain on the page of history that "he who runs may read."

He was no revolutionary, eager to disturb the

settled order. If things as they are can be brought to square with God's eternal law of righteousness, let them be; if not, then let them go. Let justice be done though the heavens fall. Such was the attitude of all the better men of the Puritan party. It was not till men of the highest character were set in the pillory, their noses slit, their ears sawn off, their flesh branded with hot irons by the decree of a tyrannical and unconstitutional Court, that the souls of men who believed in God and His eternal laws were roused within them to protest against the iniquity; and it was not till all constitutional methods of righting what was wrong had failed that they felt compelled to draw the sword in the sacred cause of freedom. Cromwell's faith in God included in its scope at first the common belief in "the divinity which doth hedge about a king"; and it was not till he was compelled to face the alternative of loyalty to the King on the one hand or God on the other that he felt compelled to renounce his allegiance to the earthly sovereign. We can readily sympathise with those true-hearted men who shrank back when they saw to what the logic of events was leading them; but this need not hinder us from seeing that even in that act which was most questionable of all, it was faith in God and in His righteousness and truth which lay at the foundation.

A proper appreciation of this strength of faith will not only set in a true light the character of

the Puritans and of Cromwell in particular, but also enable us to understand their attitude towards the arts of culture and refinement. It has been the common superstition that the Puritans generally, and Cromwell in particular, despised the amenities of life, reckoned art as of the devil, and condemned even innocent amusements. This was no doubt true of some extreme sour-faced fanatics; but it is no longer accepted by impartial critics as a fair estimate of the genius of Puritanism. It was only when in the name of art or amusement an assault was made on that which was dearer to them than life that their fury was roused, and they were impelled to utterances and deeds which in the calm after-light of reason seem fanatical and extreme. Cromwell's most recent biographer reminds us that he was fond of music and had a distinct feeling for the other arts; and the *Spectator* in a recent article, characterised by the fairness which we naturally expect in that quarter, after reminding us that "it was Charles II. who offered to sell the cartoons of Raphael; it was Cromwell who insisted on keeping them for the nation," adds, "to represent men like Milton and Colonel Hutchinson as enemies of culture, and of sport and recreation, is utterly preposterous." The faith which was at the foundation of the character of Cromwell and the genius of Puritanism was not in its essence narrow. It was stern and unyielding; it brooked no rival; it claimed imperial sway over life; but it had room in it for

"whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report."

Such, then, was the faith which lay at the foundation of the character of Oliver Cromwell; and there is nothing more needed in England now. There is happily no danger now from the throne; that was settled, for ever let us hope, by the great struggle of the seventeenth century. But the tyranny of the priest—is it not as real a danger as in the days of Laud? And the tyranny of sense as seen in the advance of ritual and ceremonial: what is to become of faith in the unseen in days when men demand a visible Church with a visible Head, and a visible priest, and an audible absolution, and a tangible presence—if not tangible, then not real? Oh for that faith which will endure as seeing Him who is invisible, which will believe in the unseen Christ, in the holy catholic Church, in the reality of the spiritual presence, in the possibility of worship in spirit and in truth without a return to the "beggarly elements" of a superseded Judaism. And then the tyranny of mammon, of limited liability companies, of syndicates, of monopolies, of gigantic combinations for selfish ends—do we not need mighty men of faith to test these things by the will of God and the eternal law of righteousness—to bring them to the arbitrament of God's law of love, and to say: Whatever vested interests may be in the way, the law

of God must and shall prevail. This England of ours, this world of ours, shall not be the happy hunting-ground of greedy speculators; it shall be the kingdom of God and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.

II

From the faith which lay at the foundation of Cromwell's life, we turn to the ideal which he ever kept before him. As he was no poet, he would not have put it in David's way, but it was the very same. His passion was to see England the kingdom of God, and he thought it could be attained by the setting up of a righteous, God-fearing Government. His faith in God was the impelling power of his life; his ideal determined the direction in which its force should be exerted, the end to which his energies should be devoted. It was inevitable that by the people of the time who were out of sympathy with his principles, and by the people of later time who were guided by the literature of the Restoration, he should be credited with the vulgar aim of seeking the gratification of an insatiable ambition; but such a view is now confined to those who, "looking into the great soul of the man, . . . see nothing there but the shadow of their own mean darkness." He was perfectly aware that he must be misunderstood, but this did not disturb him overmuch. As early as 1647, in the interval between the two civil

wars, we find him writing thus: "Though, it may be, for the present a cloud may lie over our actions to those who are not acquainted with the grounds of them, yet, we doubt not, God will clear our integrity and innocency from any other ends we aim at but His glory and the public good." Even so good a man as Richard Baxter lost faith in the purity of his motives. His verdict was: "Cromwell meant honestly, and was pious and conscionable in the main course of his life, till prosperity and success corrupted him." One does not at all wonder at this verdict from one who, with very different views as to what was expedient for the good of the country, looked only at the doings of this masterful man; but we can well imagine what a relief it would have been to his heart if he could have had before him the evidence we now have that he retained the simplicity of his character, the purity of his motives, and the elevation of his ideal right on to the end.

It is impossible, in the limits of a discourse, to cite sufficient proof of this. Let it be enough to refer to the testimony of such a one as the writer of the article on Cromwell in the "Dictionary of National Biography," where, after quoting this opinion of Baxter, he says: "But the study of Cromwell's letters and speeches leads irresistibly to the conclusion that he was honest and genuine throughout." And perhaps more striking than even the famous passages in the letters and speeches is his dying prayer, which shows, even as these last words of

David show, what was the ruling passion of his life. He was, as is well known, deeply concerned as to his personal salvation; he was tenderly solicitous for the members of his family; but it is neither on himself nor on his kindred that his heart is set in that solemn hour—it is the welfare of the people. "Lord, though I am a miserable and wretched creature, I am in covenant with Thee through grace. And I may, I will come to Thee for Thy people. Thou hast made me, though very unworthy, a mean instrument to do them some good and Thee service; and many of them have set too high a value upon me, though others wish and would be glad of my death. Lord, however Thou do dispose of me, continue and go on to do good for them. Give them consistency of judgment, one heart, and mutual love: and go on to deliver them, and with the work of reformation, and make the name of Christ glorious in the world. Teach them who look too much on Thy instruments to depend more upon Thyself. Pardon such as desire to trample upon the dust of a poor worm, for they are Thy people too. And pardon the folly of this short prayer, even for Jesus Christ's sake, and give us a good night, if it be Thy pleasure. Amen."

Is not this the spirit that is wanted, in these days of ours, in our statesmen—ay, and in all our Christian people? The first thing no doubt, now as then, is to be in covenant with God through grace; but that point reached, the thought even of personal salva-

tion should be lost in the overmastering desire for the coming of the Kingdom, for the welfare of the people, for the public good, for making the name of Christ glorious in the world of men.

III

When we pass from the great ideal of Oliver Cromwell to the measure in which it was attained, we have to leave the heights of vision and struggle as best we may on the rugged mountains of hard reality. We have, in fact, to follow our text from the vision of the sunny springtime in the freshness after rain, to the confession of disappointment which marks the close of David's rather sad farewell to life and work for God and for the people.

We have seen that Cromwell hoped to attain his ideal by the setting up of a righteous, God-fearing Government. Was he justified in such an expectation? Was David justified in what he says about it? We fear the answer must be No, in the sense in which both the one and the other understood it. When we remember indeed that the words of David not only set forth his own ideal, but were a prophecy of the coming of One who would be the Ruler over men in a far higher and more commanding sense, we can see the possibility of an affirmative answer. Let the government be such as the Lord Jesus Christ exercises over His people; let His Kingdom come throughout society, taking hold of

the hearts and controlling the lives of men, and verily the prospect would be speedily and fully realised. But so long as it was only such a government as was possible to David or to Cromwell, the hope was vain and necessarily doomed to disappointment.

Let us, however, be fair to Oliver. He was not so short-sighted as to imagine that England could be made the kingdom of God by the rule of Major-generals or by the laws of a Protectorate Parliament. Soldier though he was, he knew that force was no remedy for the evils under which the country groaned. His main reliance was neither on the army nor on the Parliament, but on the preaching of the Word. The Gospel of God had converted him; why should it not convert England? The motto still in use in the city of Glasgow was his motto for the country: "Let England flourish by the preaching of the Word." Hence the superlative importance he attached to those measures by which he hoped to secure a steady supply of godly, faithful, zealous preachers of the Gospel, such as his Supreme Commission for the trial of public preachers, and his scheme of Expurgators for every county; men whose business was by no means to look out for heresy—for Oliver was no purist in the matter of doctrine—but to see to it that only men of godly life were permitted to be teachers of the people. He did not realise how little it was in the power of either Protector or Parliament to secure that preachers, any more than the people,

should be even godly and faithful, much less that they should be "endued with power from on high." He did not sufficiently realise in fact that his ideal, which was, as we have seen, the highest and noblest, was not one to be reached *per saltum*, not to be attained in the short span of a single life, even though the man who tried it be one of earth's mightiest, invested with supreme civil authority and resistless military power.

But he faces the disappointment of his later years in the same indomitable spirit with which he had faced the difficulties of the earlier time. Like David he assigns the failure, not at all to God, but to the feebleness of the instrument by whom, and the refractoriness of the people among whom, the attempt had to be made. I have no evidence that this passage was among the favourites of Oliver, but I am sure that it accurately represents his feeling in regard to the disappointment of his highest hopes: "Verily my house is not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for it is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He maketh it not to grow. But the ungodly shall be all of them as thorns to be thrust away, for they cannot be taken with the hand: but the man that toucheth them must be armed with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place." In one of his earlier letters during the first Civil War, he writes: "God exceedingly abounds in His goodness to us, and will

not be weary until righteousness and peace meet, and until He hath brought forth a glorious work for the happiness of this poor kingdom." Ten years later he sorrowfully admits that "our design . . . hath miscarried in that we hoped for, through the disposing hand of God, for reasons best known to Himself, and, as we may justly conceive, for our sins; yet is not this cause the less His, and will be owned by Him as I verily believe, and therefore I dare not relinquish it." Still later, in his closing days in fact, he speaks much of God's covenant, and says that faith in it is his one support. Thus he carried to the end his absolute faith in God, and in the ultimate accomplishment of His Holy Will, even when he had to confess that "He maketh it not to grow."

And we can well understand how thoroughly he would sympathise with David in what he says about the ungodly, those who set themselves in determined opposition to the will of God and the welfare of the people. Here again we have an explanation of some of the darker deeds in Cromwell's life, notably in the Irish campaign. It is now fully acknowledged that never was there general more careful that non-combatants should be spared not only their lives, but their property; and that when he did relentlessly put to death whole garrisons, it was not until after all possible warning and delay, and the giving of every opportunity for laying down what he regarded as the weapons of their rebellion. There is abundant

evidence that not at all in cruelty of heart, but under stress of conscience, did he carry out inexorably his threats of vengeance. We do not say that his conscience was enlightened; it is more than probable that it was in bondage to a literalism in the application of certain Old Testament Scriptures which was too prevalent in that day, and is not yet quite obsolete even in our time. There was then no doctrine of ethical development to soften the stringency of the law laid down for the general of an army of the Lord in such a passage as Deut. xx. 10, 12, 13: "When thou drawest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. . . . And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it; and when the Lord thy God delivereth it into thine hand, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword." And it is noteworthy that it was only those whom he reckoned "the ungodly" who were to be as thorns thrust away, and not to be taken with the hand. This accounts for the great difference of his procedure in Scotland. There it is the people of the Covenant against whom he is contending; and while he regards them as wholly in the wrong, and therefore to be resisted, he yet thinks of them as God's people—misguided and mistaken indeed, still the people of God, and therefore to be tenderly dealt with. The others he regarded as open enemies of God, as the ungodly, to be all of them as thorns thrust away.

This is a painful subject, but to be faithful to our text and also to our theme it was necessary to look it in the face; and perhaps it may help us to bear better the disappointment we all must feel that a man of such mighty faith and such high and noble ideals, and such extraordinary ability and power, should nevertheless have to confess a sad shortcoming in the attainment of the high hopes which had animated him throughout his strenuous career. For, alas! before his work was done he found that in England as well as in Ireland, and even among those who had been with him in his early days, there were men so refractory, so like thorns, that the man who touched them had to be armed with iron and the staff of a spear. Thus it was that he had to be a man of blood and iron to the end, unable, like David, to build the temple of the Lord, obliged to leave that for a calmer and more peaceful time, though it is a consolation indeed to see him at the very close putting forth his power and the might which England had attained under his robust administration for the highest ends, as when he stayed the persecution of the saints of God in the Vaudois valleys.

"The Lord said unto David . . . Whereas it was in thine heart to build a house for My name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart; nevertheless thou shalt not build the house"; and the reason given for it is the wars which were about him on

every side. But though David could not build the house, those very wars which hindered him were the necessary preparation for the great day of achievement. History speaks not of David's but of Solomon's Temple; but if you look well at the foundation on which it was reared, you recognise that it is to the warlike father rather than to the wealthy son that Israel owed, not the Temple alone, but the national existence and the institutions of which the Temple was the centre and embodiment. So has it been with Cromwell. He did not build the Temple of British freedom, but he laid the foundation deep and strong. Of the rich harvest which sprang up in the revolution of 1688, the fruits of which we are now enjoying—of that great harvest Oliver Cromwell sowed the seed. It was a sowing in the autumn-time. The seed lay buried during the dreary winter which followed. Oh! it was a time of gaiety and revelry; a very summer-time of lust. But it was the winter-time of all high and holy ideals. It was the eclipse of the sun of Puritan faith, with the flaring of gas and burning of candles to take its place. But the seed did not perish in that winter-time. It lay all ready to spring up when William of Orange rallied the people around the Protestant flag.

From that time right on to the present day we have been safe from the tyranny of kingcraft. That was a noble answer which was given by Bernard Woodward to the young Princess Royal

when, in looking over his collection of miniatures, she came across the face of Cromwell and exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Woodward, you can't like *that* man." His answer was, "Your Royal Highness must know that my admiration and loyalty to your Royal Highness's mother are such that I cannot but reverence the memory of a man to whose struggles for liberty we owe the unspeakable blessing of possessing such a monarch on a constitutional throne."[1] Of the great temple of our political liberties as against kingly tyranny Cromwell laid deep and strong the foundation. Thank God there is no fear of encroachment there. The Prince of Wales is as loyal to our free constitution as is his noble mother.

But priestcraft—what shall we say? There it almost seems as if Cromwell's work had to be done again. Are we to go back to the narrow bigotry of cruel Laud? God forbid. Surely the Church of Ridley and Latimer will not be recreant, will not allow itself any longer to be dragged down into the abyss of mediæval superstition by a Romanising priesthood; and if it do, surely the Free Churchmen of England will show that the spirit of Cromwell and his Ironsides has not died out of us, that we shall resist to the uttermost, determined to stand fast in the liberty wherewith, through the instrumentality of Cromwell and other heroes of old, Christ hath made us free, and refuse

[1] Newman Hall: an Autobiography, p. 40.

to be entangled again in the yoke of bondage. Let us see to it that this three hundredth anniversary of the birth of England's greatest hero be the occasion of such a rally of the forces of freedom that the sacerdotal host shall be utterly routed, and the temple of religious liberty be completed to its very head-stone—the great battle of religious liberty finally and for ever won.

THE END

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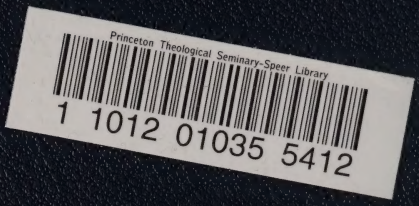
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